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MORAL DISCOURSES ON PROVIDENCE AND OTHER IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

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Page 81, l. 3, for imystics, *read* mystics.

DISCOURSE I.

2 KINGS iv. 13.

And he ſaid unto him, ſay now unto her, behold, thou haſt been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldeſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or to the captain of the hoſt? And ſhe anſwered, I dwell among mine own people.

WITHOUT inſiſting on the traditional evidence of revelation, or the proofs of the divine authority and inſpiration of the ſcriptures, we ſhall here only obſerve upon two ſtriking proofs of the veracity of ſacred writ. The firſt of theſe is the deſcription of the human

paſſions, which are uniform in their operations, and the ſame in their effects, in the ſame circumſtances, through the whole human race. The ſecond of theſe proofs which may be adduced for the truth and divine authority of the ſcriptures is the moral leſſon or divine inſtruction which runs through and enriches the whole. Characters and actions are here repreſented not merely as they are perſonal, accidental, or natural, but as they are moral, refer to a ſuperior law, and are pleaſing or diſpleaſing to the Lord of heaven and earth. In the ſacred ſtory, you may collect a leſſon from almoſt every character; you are invited to virtue and religion, or deterred from vice and impiety, by the promiſes, the happineſs and approbation of heaven attending the one; and by the threatenings, and the judgments of God denounced and generally executed againſt, and overtaking the other. You cannot ſeriouſly and

impartially peruſe your Bible, without being a wiſer and a better man, more informed in the knowledge of human nature, and more powerfully drawn to the practice of your reaſonable duty.

WHAT we here obſerve as the general purport and tendency of the ſacred writings, we ſhall, at this time, endeavour to illuſtrate and exemplify, by commenting more at large on the particular paſſage now read to you, in the words of the text.

ELISHA the prophet, in his labours and travails undergone in the diſcharge of his duty, had been hoſpitably entertained, and received ſingular marks of favour and eſteem from this Shunamite. In thoſe times of ſimplicity, the prophet of God was not without honour: his character commanded reſpect at leaſt, if not reverence; and the ſervant was treated with decency, if not for his own, yet for his maſter's ſake.

The prophet did not think himſelf, from a ſenſe of his divine commiſſion, diſcharged from the obligation of his moral duty: nor did he think the good woman ſo complete a pattern of perfection, as to be entirely free from the paſſions of her ſex, and of human nature. "What, ſays he by his ſervant "Gehazi, is to be done for thee? Wouldeſt "thou be ſpoken for to the king, or to the "captain of the hoſt." The prophet's modeſty was here as remarkable as his gratitude: he wanted not high things for himſelf, but was willing to promote the honeſt claims and pretenſions of others; and ſuch is the frame and frailty of human nature, that very honeſt hearts are not always exempt from the workings of ambition. The exaltation of the moſt infamous to offices and honours, ſometimes gives a ſecret wound to a good man's breaſt. He feels himſelf fired with indignation at leaſt, if not with envy, to find that he is treated worſe than the reſt of mankind. He is hurt by ſeeing the wicked in ſuch great proſperity; and wiſhes,

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if not for his own, yet for God and virtue's ſake, not to be utterly deprived of the favours and bleſſings of heaven. The Shunamite indeed, it is ſaid, "was a great woman," and therefore, we may ſuppoſe, under no neceſſity, from the diſtreſs of her preſent condition, to entertain future hopes of increaſing fortune or accumulated honours: yet we know, that the moſt opulent are often the moſt craving, and the very higheſt the moſt aſpiring. The prophet therefore reſpecting theſe paſſions in human nature; or, for a proof of the Shunamite's virtue, contentment, and equal ſpirit, has it propoſed to her, "Wouldeſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or to the captain of the hoſt?" If avarice and ambition were to be ſatisfied, here was a large field for their range and gratification. For what could avarice wiſh for, more than a ſhower from the royal treaſury? or what could ambition aſpire to, higher than the ſmile of royal favour? How would the proſpect have ſwelled the heart, elevated the eye, and dignified the

gait of many a ſervile courtier, when virtue itſelf might have been ſtaggered, and modeſt merit ſeduced from its ſhade, by the offer and diſplay of ſuch a dazzling temptation! Nor let it be ſaid that the female breaſt is unſuſceptible of ambition! Excluded as they are from manly offices and heroic action, women are not without their ſenſe of honour and claim of diſtinction and pre-eminence. Their importance riſeth in proportion to their power or influence; what they cannot poſſeſs themſelves they are proud to confer on others, and they find themſelves elevated by the elevation of their friends or family. The modeſty and moral character of the Shunamite is therefore the more conſpicuous as ſhe appears, notwithſtanding the opportunity, to have entertained no views of intereſt or ambition for herſelf, her family, or her friends. To the offer of court favour and the moſt powerful patrons ſhe makes this ſhort but memorable reply, "I dwell among mine own people." The moral is ſtriking, and the more ſo, as it

it is dictated by a female heart, ſuperior in this inſtance to the attractions of pleaſure, to the pomp of equipage, to the ſplendor of wealth and titles, the common appendages of a court. "I dwell," ſays this illuſtrious Shunamite, "among mine own people."

LET us conſider more particularly, and the more we examine, the more we ſhall be charmed both with the wiſdom and piety of her conduct.

1. IT is a principal part of wiſdom to conform our ſpirits, our paſſions and deſires to our ſituation and circumſtances; not to embitter our preſent portion of good, by a reſtleſs longing after what is abſent or future; not to exchange certain poſſeſſion for precarious hopes; not to forego a ſtate of happineſs which we have proved, for one of which we have had no trial or experience. There are virtues which love to flouriſh in the ſhade, that would be ſcorched or blaſted, and ſoon wither away if expoſed to

the ſunſhine of a court. There are many things which, ſeen at a diſtance, make a gay and tempting appearance, but loſe all their colour and lovelineſs as you draw nearer, and perhaps entirely fade away, as you grow more familiar with them. Diſtance often hides the deformity of an object; and what you admired as an angel, upon a nearer acquaintance you deteſt as a monſter. How brilliant, for inſtance, appears the form and exterior of a court! Eaſe and magnificence, pomp and pleaſure, fortune, honours, and glory ſeem here to have fixed their abode, and to diſplay and offer to your acceptance all that can make and keep man happy; but if you draw nearer, and you yourſelf become an actor upon this ſtage of ſplendor and magnificence, you would find a ſtrange alteration in the ſcenes, the action, and the characters: the leſs you ſuſpected, the more you would be ſurpriſed with the ambition, the jealouſy and envy, the faction, the falſhood, the flattery, the inſidious arts and baſe deſigns, the ſelfiſh views, the reſtleſs

leſs cares and excruciating paſſions which engroſs the breaſts and embitter the lives of the moſt ſucceſsful courtiers, and firſt favourites of the prince. Had the Shunamite left her own people, where ſhe had been, no doubt, treated ſuitably to her character, with ſincere reſpect and cordial affection; would ſhe have thought the loſs of theſe ſufficiently compenſated by hollow compliments and falſe careſſes, the common language of a court? Would ſhe have preferred ceremony, hypocriſy, and diſſimulation to that ſimplicity of manners with which ſhe had been acquainted? Or would ſhe have thought her morning devotion, her noontide ſhade, her evening walk and meditation, and her peaceful ſlumbers well exchanged for the ſplendid amuſements, the noiſe, the buſineſs and buſtle of a court? Could ſhe who had enjoyed the vacant hour, the independent ſpirit, the ample fortune and domeſtic peace; had been reſpected, had been honoured and perhaps obeyed; could ſhe now ſtoop to ſervility, debaſement and depend

dependence, to the ſacrifice of her liberty, her time and talents, obliged to watch the eye of another, a ſlave to the will of a maſter, or to the nod of a tyrant? Could ſhe, great as ſhe was, deſert her dignity to be the minion of a court? Could ſhe, popular as we may ſuppoſe her, and endeared to her neighbours, her kindred and people, by acts of beneficence and charity; could ſhe renounce theſe with the manners of nature and the virtues of ſincerity and good faith, to adopt artificial good breeding and the phraſe in faſhion, intended not to expreſs but to conceal the heart? Great as this woman already was, and reſpectable in her preſent ſphere, would it have become her prudence to ſtoop her greatneſs by appearing a needy or an ambitious beggar upon a ſtage ſhe had not trod before, where ſhe was liable to be ſhaded or envied, and maligned and traduced alike for her good or bad conduct and ſucceſs? Content as ſhe already was and happy in her ſituation, would it have ſpoke the part of wiſdom to expect an addition to her

her happineſs by breathing the air of a court, or the improvement of her contentment by indulging and enlarging her condition.

2. THE Shunamite was, no doubt, better inſtructed in moral duties and the principles of religion than to entertain any ſuch irrational and extravagant hopes. Her moderate and well-cultivated ſpirit, her juſt notions of happineſs, of contentment or a ſufficiency ſeem to appear in the furniture ſhe aſſigns for the chamber of the prophet. "And ſhe ſaid unto her huſband, behold "now, I perceive that this is an holy man of "God which paſſeth by us continually. "Let us make a little chamber I pray thee "on the wall, and let us ſet for him there "a bed, and a table and a ſtool and a can-"dleſtick, and it ſhall be when he cometh "to us, that he ſhall turn in thither." Such ſentiments concerning the proviſion neceſſary, and which would be ſufficient for the accommodation of the holy man of God, ſpeak a philoſophic and a religious ſpirit in the provider.

provider. His God, might the Shunamite ſeem to think, and ſay upon this occaſion, is his all: in the preſence of his God he knows no void: in the all-ſufficiency of his God he knows no wants: the ſincerity and ſimplicity of his love to God will admit no rival affections, no foreign enjoyments, no damping alloys: variety would diſtract the tenor, abundance would chill the flame of his devotion: delicacy would diſguſt: luxury offered to piety would be an inſult, not a favour. The ſervant of God is humble, is modeſt, is mortified, is equal to every fortune, is content with every condition; his paſſions are chaſtiſed, his deſires moderate, his ſpirit correct and elevated: in poſſeſſing God, he poſſeſſes all things: the ſhade is his choice; retreat his aſylum and refuge from the noiſe and follies of life: a cottage, a cell is to him a royal palace, where he has audience with his God and communion with the world of ſpirits: much ceremony, much ſervice and pom-

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pous preparation would not ſuit the taſte of him who has made God his portion, and whoſe converſation is in heaven: the little mind alone is captivated with little things: the great and divine ſoul is ſatisfied from itſelf, has a world within itſelf, dwelling on him and in him who is the ſpiritual, the all-perfect, the all-preſent, the infinite and eternal Being, and regards with contempt or indifference this paſſing and periſhing world. The prophet of God has a mind ſuperior to the objects of ſenſe and nature, to the delicacies, the luxuries and elegancies of life. A chamber on the wall therefore, a bed, a table, a ſtool and a candleſtick will be more ſuited to the ſpirit of this heaven-commiſſioned prophet, this holy man of God, than a richer, a prouder, and more pompous apparatus.

II.

SUCH we may naturally ſuppoſe were the reflections of the Shunamite from the orders

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ſhe here gives reſpecting the entertainment and reception of the prophet. None but ſuch a one who had ſome taſte of the ſpirit and power of religion, could have formed ſo true a judgment of a ſacred character, and what would be moſt agreeable to the manners and temper of a "holy man of God:" that this "great woman" had a proper ſenſe of the ſpirit and power of religion, appears farther from the reply ſhe here gives to the offer made her by the prophet, of being "ſpoken for to the king, or to the captain of the hoſt." We can ſcarcely imagine mere philoſophy operating ſo powerfully in a female breaſt, as to extinguiſh the paſſions that were natural and yet not groſsly criminal, which had the appearance of virtue in their exertion, and were envied or admired as proſperous and happy in their ſucceſs. That woman is perhaps yet unknown, who from a principle of pure prudence declined or rejected the faſhions, the favours, the pleaſures, the pomp, the pageantry, the gaiety and ſplendor of a court, when they lay

lay open to her advances, and invited her approach and acceptance. To ſerve their friends, to ſerve their country and the public, are the pretences frequently aſſumed by avarice and ambition to maſk their vain deſign—to ſerve themſelves. To be inveſted with place and power, with offices and honours, if it is not virtue, yet in the common eſtimation, it is held for glory. The Shunamite therefore in rejecting the offer made her of court intereſt and princely favour, may be ſuppoſed to act from better and higher principles than thoſe of prudence and worldly wiſdom. So ſignal had been the interpoſition of God in the conducting, and the preſervation of his people Iſrael, that we cannot wonder at the piety and religious principles of any of their race. The Shunamite we may preſume from her reſpect to the prophet Eliſha, was not without the higheſt reverence and devotion to his God: and we cannot well aſſign a more natural, or a more noble motive to her conduct upon the preſent occaſion, in declining the views

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of intereſt and ambition which opened to her proſpect, than a thorough ſenſe of religion, of the duties it exacted and the happineſs it produced. When therefore the queſtion was put, "Wouldeſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or to the captain of the hoſt?" it was the *pious* woman who anſwered, "I dwell among mine own people." As if ſhe had ſaid;

THE great God of Iſrael, the Lord of heaven and earth is my God; he hath engaged my heart, and challenges my beſt affections; and here amidſt the ſimplicity of nature, among my flocks and herds, my plain but honeſt neighbours, I experience his bleſſed preſence more clearly and fully than I ſhould do in courts and camps: where art ſupplants nature: where honeſty gives place to policy; and good manners are more attended to than good faith and a good conſcience; where the tongue is taught a language foreign to the heart, and truth and virtue make little or no part in the general commerce.

commerce. At home temptation holds out no falſe colours or ſpecious lure to deceive me. Luxury does not ſpread its bait; corruption holds not out its bribe; ſplendor does not dazzle the ſenſe; pleaſures do not debaſe my heart; nor flattery corrupt my judgement. I ſhare in, I enjoy the bleſſings of God in nature, pure and unſophiſticated: I am ſurrounded through heaven and earth, with the operations of his hand. Every object I converſe with, is a leſſon of duty or devotion: I have not indeed the rich carpet to tread, nor the ſoft couch to repoſe on: my dome is not ſupported or adorned with pillars of marble, nor do I quench my thirſt in goblets of gold: but the peace of God within, ſheds peace on all around me, gives ſweetneſs to every taſte, ſerenity to every ſcene, and beauty to every proſpect: in the preſence and protection of the God of hoſts, the king of kings and lord of lords, I enjoy a ſecurity, I behold a ſplendor and glory which at once extinguiſh and reduce to a ſhadow the brighteſt blaze of human great-

neſs. If I have not acceſs to the ear of the prince, nor intereſt with his favourite or the captain of the hoſt, it is enough that I am admitted to the throne of God, have the aſſurance of his grace and the promiſe of his favour. If I am not inveſted with titles, with offices and honours, neither am I encumbered with buſineſs, with matters that are too high for me, with form, with ceremony, and much ſervice. If I have no connection with the great, neither am I ſubject to the practice of the ſervility, of the flattery and falſhood required in the addreſſes of their dependants. If I am not admitted to pay my devoirs to principalities and powers, to figure in the cabinet or in the drawing room, I have what I hold more precious, my liberty and independance, the uſe of my time, the freedom of my thoughts, and the undiſguiſed expreſſion of my honeſt ſentiments. I am not indeed entertained with the news of the day, with the ſecrets of the cabinet, with the views of the factious, with the ſchemes of the intereſted and aſpiring, with

dangers

dangers to the ſtate apprehended from abroad or at home; but dwelling among mine own people, with whoſe manners I am familiar, whoſe wants, whoſe paſſions, whoſe labours and courſe of life I perfectly underſtand, I am not diverted from the great objects of my hope, my faith, my duty, my devotion, by fears or expectations of the good or ill, the changes or revolutions that may befal my country. A ſtranger to the grandeur and brilliancy, I am at the ſame time a ſtranger to the vices and miſery of a court. My preſent commerce and connections are with men of honeſt manners and native ſimplicity, who act openly, who ſpeak what they think, perform what they promiſe, and are what they ſeem. Policy is not here ſubſtituted in the room of honeſty, nor does religion degenerate into form, hypocriſy, or prieſt-craft. I converſe with my neighbours upon equal terms: as I practiſe not myſelf, I ſuſpect not in others the arts of fraud and falſhood. My happineſs depends not on the caprice of the prince, the favour of the mi-

niſter or the intrigues of a party: I rely on him for my ſupport "with whom is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning:" my wants, my paſſions, my ambition are not here inflamed by great examples, nor my happineſs diminiſhed by a compariſon with my exalted ſuperiors. My bleſſings are enhanced, and my pious gratitude improved by obſerving ſo few my equals, ſo many my inferiors in rank and fortune. If I have not the opportunity of receiving for myſelf, yet I have what is more bleſſed, the ability of giving to others. If I have no intereſt in court or camp to recommend and raiſe my friends, or to mortify and cruſh my enemies, yet I want not influence in a narrower ſphere, I can feed the hungry or cloath the naked, inſtruct the ignorant and ſupport the afflicted: I can be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame; I can make the widow's heart to ſing for joy.

I CONSIDER life as an uncertain, a ſhort and momentary ſcene; its importance

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and happineſs to conſiſt, not in the power and intereſt of men, but in the protection and favour of God; not in receiving my good things at preſent, but in the bleſſed hopes and expectation of immortal life. My ſituation in a court or my intereſt with the prince, would not exalt me nearer to heaven and the kingdom of bleſſed ſpirits. Dwelling as I do among mine own people, and not engaged in, or diſtracted with the buſineſs and hurry of the great world; I have more leiſure to devote my heart and affections to the God of my fathers, to meditate on his perfections, to remember his paſt mercies and to prepare for his future and eternal kingdom. Here ambition is extinguiſhed, deſire is ſatisfied, thought is loſt, and hope can extend no further. In the principles, in the practice, in the comforts, the joys and proſpects of religion, I have a happineſs, ſuperior to chance or time, independent of nature, and the world, and which neither the king nor the captain of the hoſt can give or take away; God, the infinite God is preſent

with me in every ſituation, my portion, my father, and my friend: heaven is ever open to my eye: the wants, the wiſhes of nature cannot aſpire higher, nor require more for their relief, their gratification and happineſs. Bleſſed in the vale of life with the preſence and peace of God, I look down with pity upon, I ſend up my prayers to heaven for the king and the captain of the hoſt. Let them fight their battles, let them ſubdue their enemies, let them raiſe to themſelves monuments of victory from their thouſands and ten thouſands ſlain, I envy not their glory whilſt they leave to me tranquility. Let them enjoy the honour that cometh from men; ſufficient for me is the approbation and favour of God: let fortune, let titles, let every enſign of greatneſs be the portion of him whom the king ſhall delight to honour: let duty and good offices to my fellow-creatures employ my time and engage my talents: let the works and ways of God arreſt my attention, and inflame my devotion: let the preſence of God attend

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and direct all my steps, let the light of God meet me in all my views, let the peace of God and peace of conscience whisper comfort to my shade, and every passing day and hour be marked, be sweetned, be dignified, be consecrated, be brightened by the good deed or good thought, by a taste of divine truth and a sense of divine mercy, by the perfections and love of God held out to me in the prospect of heaven and earth, by a constant sense of his presence here, and by the lively hope of his glory hereafter! A woman, no adventurer in the camp, no assistant in the councils of my prince, I disclaim the royal favour, and will bear no part in the prostitution of the honours, or in the diminution of the revenues of the crown. I have nothing to request of the king or the captain of the host. Where I receive I would reflect honour, and not disgrace my patron and benefactor by an eminent insufficiency of parts, by impropriety of conduct or insignificancy of character. Unacquainted with the business of the cabinet or the camp, my ex-

altation would only ſerve to excite envy againſt myſelf, to inflame the public odium againſt my patrons, to diſcredit their choice and expoſe their partiality. Claſſed among the inſignificants, I muſt depart from my dignity and independency, and ſink the character of "an Iſraelite indeed" for that of a needy and cringing courtier. The virtue and honour that owe their brightneſs, their value and ſignificance to the partiality and favours of men, want their trueſt foundation and beſt reward, peace of conſcience and the approbation of God. Content and ſatisfied with theſe I leave the toy of title, the eclat of office, and the pageantry of ſtate, to thoſe who have no higher reliſhes, and aſpire to no greater or ſublimer good. For me it is enough that I have too much ſpirit to be proud, too ample a fortune to be dependent, that I am too happy at home to ſeek for contentment abroad, and too rich in the bleſſings and providence of God, to value or aſpire after the favour or protection of men. Let not my ſelfiſh views of offices

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and honours for my dependants and friends diſcredit the public adminiſtration. I have no coward to recommend to lead the armies of Iſrael, and to fight the battles of the Lord: I have no brother or kinſman, cruel or corrupt, whom I would make a ruler or judge over my nation; no ſon of Belial, whom I could wiſh to ſet in Moſes's ſeat, or to advance to the altar of God. Be faction, be cabal for ever baniſhed from the female breaſt: confined to my proper province, let me "pray for the peace of Jeruſalem," or mourn in ſecret "for the afflictions of Joſeph!"

PUBLIC employment might indeed be attended with more profit and honour, but not with more innocence or pleaſure, and certainly with not leſs danger and offence. Diſengaged as I am from the ſelfiſh, the eager, the enlarged, the inflaming paſſions of the man, I find my heart more clear, more vacant and open, like wax to the ſeal, to the impreſſions and energy of the divine attributes and adminiſtration; a diſpoſition moſt ſuited to my temper and my ſex. Court-favour

vour might intoxicate my head or corrupt my heart, might lead me aſtray from the path of peace and innocence, which I have hitherto trod, might cloud my preſent happy views of nature and providence, and extinguiſh the pleaſing ſenſibility I feel for the wants, the follies and infirmities of my fellow-creatures. Be it degenerate to decline offices and honours. Let me be ſtigmatized as ſuch while I prefer independence to ſervility, ſecurity to ſplendor, and happineſs to glory. My conſtitution is too delicate to breathe the air, or rather my faculties are too inſignificant to make any figure within the circle of a court. Let me hide my inſufficiency in the ſhade, or exert my abilities in a lower ſphere, on a ſtage where they can affect no pomp and will draw no envy, where they may be diſtinguiſhed without eminence, be exerted without danger, ſhine without luſtre, where I may diſpenſe a uſeful though not a dazzling light, be agreeable more than admired, and rather amiable than glorious, where contentment and a ſufficiency ſhall

ſupply

ſupply the place of affluence, and where humility and reſignation ſhall be to me inſtead of grandeur.

In point of fortune, I have what is enough, the maſter of millions has no more. In regard to honour, I am reſpected and loved, the ambitious have not ſo much.

III.

May the king live for ever! May his throne be eſtabliſhed in righteouſneſs! May his ſubjects pay him a willing obedience! May his enemies flee or fall down before him, and may his friends ſhine in all the wealth and ſplendor of royal munificence! But let it be allowed the Shunamite to tarry by the ſheepfolds, to pitch my tent by the brooks and fountains, to hear the bleating of the flocks; let me ſtill behold the well-known faces of my friends, and continue the communication and reciprocation of good offices by which I am endeared to them: let me ſtill preſerve the ſimplicity of my native

tive manners; let me enjoy the gay ſcenes and happy proſpects of my youth and innocence, the living ſtream, the flow'ry bank, the laughing valley, the ſunny plain, the waving wood and range of diſtant mountains, let me frequent the venerable altar and offer the ſolemn ſacrifice to the God of my fathers, and let me ſtill breathe my prayers to him in a land endeared to me by a ſenſe of his bleſſings, and ſmiling under the eye of his providence.

SUPPLIED with all that the modeſt and reaſonable demands of nature require, I want no acceſſion of fortune to make me opulent: independent and reſpectable in my character among mine own people, I want no titles or honours to make me great; bleſſed with a ſenſe of God's providence and gracious diſpenſations, I want no delicacies, no external ornaments or ſplendor of life to make me happy. Bound as I am by the cords of love to the huſband of my youth, I want no other confidant, I ſeek no other friend

friend or protector. Let them ſeek happineſs abroad who are ſtrangers to it at home. The prerogatives of my huſband I hold ſacred as thoſe of my prince, and would not wiſh theſe laſt to be exerted even in my own favour to the diminution of my eſteem of the former. Some favours are too great, and would be oppreſſive to one living as I do among mine own people, and content with domeſtic fame: I muſt deſpiſe myſelf could I entertain a higher eſteem for the king, or the captain of the hoſt, than for the man to whom I have given my plighted faith and vows.

To give room to the ſuſpicion of a crime, would be criminal in a wife or a mother in Iſrael. Abſence from court is perhaps the principal preſervative of my innocence, my reputation and peace: would the prophet of God expoſe me to the danger and loſs of theſe, and for the ſake of the public walks deprive me of the moſt valuable bleſſings of life. The faſhion of the world has in it a kind

kind of magical power, and confounds the diſtinction of moral good and evil; and gives authority and currency to falſhood and folly: faſhion may pervert the very nature and uſe of things, apply language not to expreſs but to conceal the ſentiments, not to inform but to deceive a brother. Faſhion may reject ſincerity as inconſiſtent with good manners. Faſhion may ſubſtitute politeneſs in the room of good faith, and the word of honour to ſupply the place of a good conſcience. Faſhion may paſs chicane for law, ſophiſtry for logic, and eſtabliſh might for right. Led by faſhion we may meaſure the greatneſs of the man by the greatneſs of his office, by the greatneſs of his fortune, or perhaps by the greatneſs of his crimes. Faſhion may call bitter ſweet, and ſweet bitter: may adopt art for nature, deformity for beauty, or eſtabliſh novelty as the ſtandard for grace and elegance; and thus the religion of our fathers may be exploded as an antiquated fable.

If ſuch is the world, if ſuch the faſhion of the world, let me ſtill dwell in my own country, among the remaining examples of ancient ſimplicity, amidſt whom I may ſtill preſerve my reaſon unclouded, with a heart uncorrupted and ever open to truth, to nature and to God: where great names will not impoſe upon me, nor great examples miſlead me, nor folly, nor faſhion, nor vain philoſophy pervert and ſeduce me from the principles and venerable inſtitutes of my fathers; where I ſhall experience and admire virtue in her native beauty, where I ſhall behold vice in her proper deformity, not dreſſed out and decorated with artificial colours, nor ornamented with the ſplendor of wealth and titles. Here I have no occaſion to be upon my guard againſt falſe ſmiles and a gloſſing tongue; I am under no neceſſity of practiſing deceit and adulation. As truth, nature, reaſon and conſcience dictate, thoughts ariſe ſincere and unpremeditated, and language flows eaſy and unlaboured. I am under no more conſtraint to live, than to talk after the humour

humour of others, to be abſurdly faſhionable, or ridiculouſly and unnaturally happy. Reaſon is the rule of my conduct, and nature chaſtiſed, the meaſure of my wants and enjoyments, and God alone, the ſupreme object of my veneration, my hopes, my deſires, my meditations, my aſpirations and delight. Among mine own people I hear not the principles of my faith inſulted, nor the rites and ſacred ceremonies of our divine Founder ridiculed. I am not here captivated with the addreſs of a court-atheiſt, nor pained and ſhocked with the bold blaſphemies of the leſs poliſhed unbeliever: here I am a ſtranger to the commerce of the world, and find my manners not tainted, nor the rigour of my principles relaxed by my connections with high life: attentive to nature, I ſee her operations conformable and uniſon to the truth of God. I ſee the courſe of eternal providence fulfilling his word and expreſſive of his character and attributes. Among my ruſtic neighbours, ſincere though ſimple, and ſenſible though untutored, I am not expoſed

poſed to the ſophiſtry of the vain, to the caſuiſtry of the vicious, or to the cunning craftineſs of men who lie in wait to deceive. Pure faith in its genuine effects upon my heart and life, carries with it a conviction irreſiſtible, and implies a power and operation more than mortal: there is a ſincerity and ſecurity, a perfection and elevation, a happineſs and glory in the evidence, the contents, the principles and proſpects of religion, that caſt a ſhade over the ſplendor of courts and camps and inſpire ſenſations of delight and joy unknown to the king and the captain of the hoſt.

LET a few years, or months, or days paſs away, and I ſhall lie down in the duſt, the common prey of worms, with kings and captains, with princes and prieſts. It is of little moment what may be my preſent condition in reſpect to fortune and honours, which can neither heighten the reliſhes of life, nor

ſmooth the terrors, nor elude the certainty of death. I am, in common with all the children of Adam, haſtening with a rapidity unintermitting and irreſiſtible, to that land of darkneſs where all things are forgotten, and where honours and fortune will profit me no more than the odours poured upon my lifeleſs corſe. If there is a folly or deluſion among mankind that may ſeem more egregious, and to proclaim itſelf more loudly than the reſt, it is that of frail, of dying, of momentary beings elated with the poſſeſſion, or engaged with all their heart and ſoul in the acquiſition of wealth, of titles, of offices and honours, as the moſt valuable and durable bleſſings, and ſuch as will never leave them nor forſake them; ignorant as it ſhould ſeem of the greateſt certainty in nature that they muſt ſoon periſh, and in a moment go down to the grave, and leave their riches to others, and that their place upon earth ſhall know them no more for ever. Aſſured as I am that death is every moment advancing upon me, and will ſoon

diveſt me of every mortal benefit, bleſſing and diſtinction; let me in the mean time cultivate the beſt good and proſecute the trueſt happineſs of which my nature is capable: happineſs or good, I am perſuaded from reaſon and experience, from nature and the truth of my God, cannot conſiſt in any thing that man, man like myſelf has to give, or can take away; not in offices, not in honours, not in fortune, rank, or power, not in the gratification of paſſions which I have in common with the brutal order. Paſſions and the indulgence of them are, and have been the general ſource of human miſery. Let me avoid this rock, and ſeek that good which cometh from God only. If theſe, if purity of heart, if conſcious peace, if contentment and reſignation, if modeſty and humility, if ſacred retreat, if delight in prayer, if heavenly hopes and aſpirations, if an union with God by faith and love, if theſe are graces and diſpoſitions to be cultivated and improved by a commerce with the world, with the city, the court and camp; I ſhould

do ill to reject any opportunity or offer made me of advancing my intereſts and connections in public life. But knowing the world to be dangerous to virtue, and generally fatal to true happineſs, I reject its offers as ſnares and temptations. I dwell among mine own people, contented and ſatisfied with my preſent ſphere, with the diſcharge of conſcience and incumbent duty, with the bleſſing of God in the proceſs of nature, and with the providence of the paſſing day: in living agreeably to the taſte, the tone, and modeſt demands of nature, I enjoy an exquiſite ſweetneſs, and purer reliſhes than were ever known to faſtidious delicacy or imperial luxury: if I am not addreſſed with laboured compliment, with affectation and ſtudied complaiſance, I am not without my entertainment from primitive manners, from ſimplicity and truth of character among my own people; here I am not miſled by appearances nor deceived by ſhew and falſe colours. Folly is not here countenanced by the authority of faſhion, nor guilt recommended by

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the ſplendid examples of mighty offenders, but vice appears with leſs luſtre, and therefore with leſs temptation; among my own people whatever outrages may be committed in practice, the purity of principle is ſtill preſerved, and the diſtinction kept up between right and wrong, vice and virtue, truth and falſhood; but in public life and courtly converſation, polite appellations are invented to ſoften or explain away the horrors of vice and the infamy of the vicious. Guilt is mere gaiety, craft is held for wiſdom, and diſſimulation or treachery for good policy: the atheiſt is ſtiled a philoſopher, the adulterer a man of gallantry, and even the murderer a man of honour. Secure as I might be of my own virtue and firmneſs in ſuch a corrupted ſtate of things, I would not be perſonally affronted by ſuch an abuſe of language, nor have my principles inſulted by ſuch a licenced violation of the laws both of God and man.

I CONFESS myſelf unqualified for the pub-

lic, and more polite ſcenes of life, where I ſhould only betray my ill nature or ill manners by not diſſembling my contempt or coldneſs for vice and folly, in whatever pomp or power, ancient or noble name, elevation of office, or ſplendor of ornament they might make their appearance. Impreſſed with early ideas of propriety, truth and nature, with the regard due to ſincere virtue, to decency, to amiableneſs of conduct and real dignity of character, I ſhould miſtake or be wanting in the reſpect and attention which the mode might exact to be paid to titled greatneſs, to nominal honours, to the inſolence of office, to the ideot of fortune, to the puppet of faſhion, or the thing of quality.

The great and honourable of the earth may demand every thing from me below adoration. I reſpect, I reverence, I admire true greatneſs, whenever it manifeſts itſelf in true goodneſs, in ſubſtantial wiſdom, in propriety, in dignity, in ſanctity of manners,

ners, in an overflowing humanity and general beneficence to mankind. But neither the authority of the magiſtrate, nor the robe of the high prieſt would ſcreen infamy, ignorance and meanneſs in the one, or in the other, from my ſcorn, indignation or pity.

NOTHING in my preſent retired ſituation interpoſes between my ſoul and God, the greateſt and beſt good, to diſpute his title, to rival his pretenſions or to diminiſh his glories. His laws, his attributes, his diſpenſations, his providence, his preſence, are here diſtinctly ſeen, more ſenſible, more viſible, more affecting in ſilence and the ſhade, than when beheld by a careleſs or diſtemper'd eye amidſt the ſplendor of a court or the confuſion of a camp. In my preſent ſituation I find nothing powerful enough to divert my attention, to ſhake my rational faith, to damp my devotion, and to extinguiſh the flame of love for the greateſt and beſt of beings, in the poſſeſſion of whom I

poſſeſs more than all the kingdoms and glories of the world. Will kings and courts ſupply the defects of divine goodneſs or compleat the meaſure of divine mercy? Will the favour of the prince improve that love of God with which I am at preſent inflamed? Or, will the ſplendor of a court brighten that light of heaven with which I am already ſurrounded? Will the manners of a court add to my virtue, or the pleaſures of a court contribute to my happineſs? Will court-favour promote my health, or my ſalvation, ſecure peace of conſcience, or inſpire the hopes of glory? Can the king or the captain of the hoſt give me a purer air to breathe, happier ſeaſons, or fairer and more lovely proſpects of nature? Will they open my mind to new and brighter diſcoveries of truth, or enlarge my ſoul to take in worthier and more ſublime conceptions of my Maker, fix him nearer and dearer to my heart, or mould me more to the image of his nature, or make me a greater ſharer of his perfections and happineſs? I thank the God of my fathers,

who

who, to the infirmities of my ſex, hath added a ſuitable ſpirit, conformable to the order of nature, not affecting the ſplendid ſcenes of life, titles of honour, or offices of truſt and dignity, public emoluments or ſordid penſions, but a ſpirit content with its ſphere, and happy in domeſtic peace, grateful for my preſent mercies and bleſſed in my future proſpects. Satisfied as I am, I want not to be rich; happy as I am, I want not to be great; reſpected as I am, I would not be honourable. If my ſphere is contracted, ſo are my cares; if my honours are modeſt and few, ſo are my paſſions; if I am no great gainer, I cannot be much a loſer in the commerce of life; if my poſſeſſions are not enlarged, neither are my fears multiplied; if my name or the name of my father's houſe in Iſrael is not great, the leſs is the anxiety and torment I am expoſed to from my own ambition, or from the envy and obloquy of others. Courts may corrupt, but are not fitted to confirm, or make a ſaint. May the ſhade be my ſecurity! Let me

ſtill

ſtill hide from the great world! Let me live to God and nature! Let me call the preſent hour my own, and vacant enjoy the revolving ſeaſons, bleſs the paſſing day, delight in the good deed, and reap from the humility and devotion of the vale, a happineſs unknown to courts and camps, to the king and the captain of the hoſt. If I were permitted to entertain a contempt or pity for any of the human race, it ſhould be for thoſe from whom a taſte for truth and nature, a regard to private and public virtue, a love of God and goodneſs are baniſhed and extinguiſhed, who are engaged in artificial amuſements, in unmeaning and inſignificant diſſipation, in an avowed proſecution of ſelf-intereſt and low ambition, in open profligacy of manners and a profeſſed ſcorn of religious principles: if I might look down as from a ſuperior ſtation on any of my fellow-mortals, it would be on pomp without greatneſs, on ſplendor without happineſs, on fortune without ſpirit, taſte, or letters. Would the prophet

conſult

conſult my intereſt? let him do it by his prayers for my perſeverance in the road of ſimplicity, truth and nature, and my delight in the ſtatutes of the God of my fathers. The prophet cannot be a ſtranger to the conſcious peace, the ſecurity and comfort, the enlarged and elevated ſentiments, the happy reflections, the triumph, the exultation, the bleſſed acquieſcence and divine fervors of the ſoul in the exerciſe of devotion, and in communion with its God; and ſhall I relinquiſh theſe to ſhare in the cabals and intrigues, the faction and torments, the jealouſies and fears, the artificial manners and ſervile debaſement, which engage the faculties and engroſs the time and paſſions of thoſe who intend the buſineſs of a courtier and aſpire to the honours of a court? For myſelf, though conſcious of the infirmities of my ſex, I have a ſufficient ſenſe of the privileges and dignity of my nature, and of my deſcent from our Father Abraham. The God of Abraham is my God, and my portion for ever. Far then be it from the

prophet

prophet to tempt me to forſake his God, and my God, and to reſign the dignity of virtue and of my ſex, a good name, the bleſſings of the poor, and my happy proſpects of nature and of God for fantaſtical pleaſures, for titular greatneſs, ſuperficial pomp, the gaze and envy of fools, for dangerous exaltation, for painful and precarious pre-eminence for the diſtinctions of a day, or the emoluments of an hour.

BLESSED with the peace, and ſtrong in the armour of conſcious virtue, ſecure in the providence and protection of heaven, poſſeſſed of fortune above my wants, and with a heart that prompts me to alleviate the ſorrows, and ſupply the wants of others, commanding as I do, not the obeiſance and ſervility, but the attachment, the reſpect and love of all around me, the beauties of nature greeting every ſenſe, devotion harmonizing every paſſion, and elevating every ſentiment of the ſoul, the preſent God ſanctifying every enjoyment, endearing to me every bleſ-

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ſing, and conſecrating every paſſing hour, gilding the riſing, gilding the parting day, meeting me in the ſacred ſhade and chearing all my ſteps with the whiſpers of his love; what has the captain of the hoſt, what have kings and courts to give, that would not affront my virtue, counteract my principles, aſſail my peace, and abſtract from my happineſs. Till the prophet can ſhew me that place and power, offices and honours, titles, dignity and diſtinction would more contribute to my peace, improve my virtue, inflame my devotion, and enlarge my ſphere of enjoyment, I ſhall be juſtified, if I prefer ſerenity and the ſhade to the ſplendor and pomp of life, truth and nature to faſhion and opinion, domeſtic comforts to court-forms and ceremonial addreſſes, liberty to dependence, contentment to ambition, and happineſs to glory.

Honours and offices, fame and fortune operating on me as they generally do on the reſt of mankind, to eraſe my moral principles,

ciples, to relax the ſteadineſs of my faith, to deaden or damp the fervor of my devotion, and to extinguiſh the flame of divine love, would be my unhappy portion. This world has no charms for me, but as it manifeſts the Maker; its buſineſs, its hurry, its pomps and pleaſures, its amuſements and follies are taſteleſs or impertinent, are pain and torture to a ſedate, a diſciplined and religious ſpirit. It knows no contentment, finds no ſatisfaction, enjoys no delight, but in conformity to the order of God and nature, in the contemplation of his truth, in the obſervance of his laws, in the belief of his promiſes, in a confidence in his providence, and a ſenſe of his preſence, at leaſt I find myſelf thus tempered, and thus happy in the God of my ſalvation. Hail! all hail! the free untainted breath of heaven! Hail ye beauteous forms of nature which ſurround me, arreſt my attention, engage my wonder, preſent paradiſaic ſcenes and inſpire enthuſiaſtic tranſports! Hail! the cloſing, hail!

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the opening day! Hail all ſeaſons and their change! Hail eternal immutable truth! Light of the mind's eye! and moſt tranſparent in the ſhade! diſcovering the nature and eſſence, the cauſes and connections of things, unveiling the natural and intellectual ſyſtem. Hail my ſage inſtructor, the companion of my vacant hours; hiſtoric truth! the faithful draught of human nature, the record, the monument of ages, of empires, and of the divine diſpenſations; Hail! above all, dear, for ever dear to my ſoul, the infinite, the eternal, the preſent Lord God Almighty! Hail univerſal goodneſs! eſſential indefectible Almighty love! living in thee, and with thee I find myſelf ſuperior to ambition, and raiſed above the wants, the frailties, the ſordid views, the vicious, the ſelfiſh, the ſinful propenſities of my nature. With an infinite ocean of good miniſtring to my taſte, my wants and capacities, can I languiſh for a penurious fountain, or reliſh the low offers which avarice and ambition have to make me, whilſt I may

I may live on angel's food, the light of heaven, the love of God, the perfections of his nature and the glories of his kingdom.

ALL hail! a life ennobled though retired, illuſtrious though in the ſhade, great though without pomp, ſecure though without guards, and placid though without flatterers; though plain yet ſolid, chearful though ſolitary, and though ſeated in the vale ranging with ever-growing delight, the heights, the depths, the expanded regions of heaven and earth! Hail the life of angels and of God himſelf! a life enlightened by his truth, informed by his wiſdom, animated by his ſpirit, ſwallowed up and loſt in wonder, devotion and love at the proſpect and immenſity of his works, his mercies, his perfections and glories.

WOULD the king and the captain of the hoſt be great and glorious, let them ſubmit with patience to their painful pre-eminence, and with ſteadineſs, conſcience and honour

diſcharge

diſcharge their public duty as the moſt arduous taſk impoſed by heaven. Let them do themſelves honour, and vindicate providence in their exaltation, not by heaping titles on the great, riches on the wealthy, and penſions on the worthleſs, but by protecting the innocent, by redreſſing the injured, by abaſhing the impudent, by countenancing the modeſt, by patronizing the pious and learned, by diſtinguiſhing, by rewarding, by ennobling the wiſe, the virtuous and the brave; but would the king and the captain of the hoſt be happy, let them renounce their ſtate, their pomp, their prerogatives, their honours and empire, and be content with the Shunamite to tread the paths of ſimple nature, and to attend to the voice of God in retirement and the ſhade. I reverence, while I pity the king, and wiſh him nearer than a throne can raiſe him to the light and peace of heaven. The prophet ſhould not need to be told that happineſs is a heavenly gueſt, and rarely viſits the palaces of princes.

It more frequently goeth by the footſteps of the flocks, and feedeth the kids beſides the ſhepherd's tents. True happineſs like the roſe of Sharon or the lilly of the valley, abhorring the groſs and fetid air of cities, courts and camps, delights in the pure elements, the open walks of nature, and the genuine influence of heaven. Away then with ambition and avarice, with affected manners, with fanciful amuſements, with ſounding titles and gaudy greatneſs, with the ſplendor of courts and the favour of kings. I will know no good, but the bleſſing which cometh from God, and which alone is able to ſanctify and exalt my nature, to eſtabliſh my peace, to ſecure, to advance, to accompliſh my happineſs, and to render the Shunamite greater than the daughters of kings.

Among my own people with the Almighty for my friend, I poſſeſs all that modeſt nature can require, that my beſt reaſon can make choice of, and my preſent mortal ſtate will admit: I aſpire no higher; I entertain

tertain not a wiſh to be happier: Can empires give more, give ſo much as a heart at eaſe truſting in God, not grieving for the paſt, not murmuring at the preſent, not anxious for the future, and raiſed by the principles of my faith above the darkneſs and frailties of mortality, above the aids of art, the accompliſhments of genius, the ornaments and honours of civil life, the ſplendor of a court, or the favours of princes, to a life and light of the pure ſoul in communion with its God, exceeding the conceptions of mere ſenſe, independent of the power and extending beyond the ſphere of nature; whoſe ſupport and centre being the all-perfect, the infinite, and eternal God is equal to, is ſufficient for every exigency and occaſion, for every fortune, time and place, and incapable of addition, or diminution from material cauſes, from elementary principles, from civil diſtinctions, from mortal honours or emoluments, from the friendſhip of kings, or the revenues of a kingdom.

DISCOURSE II.

JOHN xvii. 17.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

THESE words make part of the prayer which our bleſſed Lord offered up in behalf of his apoſtles, at a time when he had reaſon to apprehend his own ſufferings. The whole prayer breathes the moſt ardent love of God, at the ſame time it is direct-

ed to procure a bleſſing on the apoſtles, and all true believers, while the maſter expreſſes not the leaſt concern in regard to his own approaching danger. The time of this addreſs was the moſt appoſite: it is not only a prayer for, but an admonition to his diſciples, who were moſt likely to receive with due attention, and remember with a ſacred reſpect the laſt words of their departing Lord.

THAT part of the prayer now read to you, relates more immediately to the apoſtles, and their future miniſtry; to qualify them for which, the firſt grand requiſite here mentioned is Sanctification.

1. To be ſanctified, ſignifies ſometimes to be holy: ſometimes to be made holy; and at other times to be ſet apart for a ſacred uſe and deſignation. In this laſt ſenſe the altar, and the veſſels upon the altar were ſaid to be ſanctified: in the former all true believers are ſaid to be ſanctified by the holy

ly ghoſt: ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus: and ſanctified by the blood of the covenant. In the firſt and higheſt ſenſe, God is ſaid to be, as he alone is, eſſentially holy. Applied as it is in the words of the text, it ſhould ſeem to import not only a poſitive appointment or legal conſecration, but a holy diſpoſition, and a conſcience purged from dead works to ſerve the living God.

THAT ſuch a ſanctity peculiarly becomes the apoſtles and miniſters of Chriſt, muſt be acknowledged by all, who conſider the poſitive inſtitutions of God, or the reaſon and nature of things. "I will be ſanctified," ſays the Lord Jehovah, by the mouth of his law-giver Moſes, "in them that come nigh "me." "Be ye clean," ſays the prophet Iſaiah, "ye that bear the veſſels of the Lord." There were ſeveral legal impurities, and even corporal blemiſhes, which whoever laboured under among the ſons of Aaron, were, the former not admitted to the prieſthood, and the latter not ſuffered to approach

unto the holy things, but were to abſtain from eating of the firſt-fruits, and the ſacrifices, though the allotted portion of the prieſts. Theſe were plainly typical of that moral turpitude and inward corruption, which rendered man unfit for the ſervice of his Maker. It may be further remembered, that the conſecration of the legal prieſthood, was by ſacrifices, which employed guilt to be done away as preparatory to the ſacred offices. But ſtill this legal conſecration by ſacrifice, was no more than type and ſhadow, and ſanctified only to the purifying of the fleſh, "for "the law having a ſhadow of good things "to come, and not the very image of the "things, could never with thoſe ſacrifices, "which they offered year by year, make the "comers thereunto perfect;" "but by the "will of God we are now (fully) ſanctified "through the offering of the body of Jeſus "Chriſt."

2. If we conſider the office of preachers of the goſpel, it cannot be imagined that

a

a mere legal ſeparation, without ſanctity of life and manners, ſhould enable any man to give proof of his miniſtry, and to fulfil the work of an apoſtle. The world, in this improved age, when the beggarly elements of the law are no more, is wiſer than to be caught by forms. It is the word and ſpirit of God attending the adminiſtrations of man, that can alone make us veſſels unto honour, ſanctified and meet for the Maſter's uſe, and prepared to every good work. A carnal prieſt, under any diſpenſation, is ſtill but a legal prieſt. He is indeed authorized by the letter, while he foregoes, or forgets the ſpirit of his commiſſion: having a form of Godlineſs, he denies the power thereof, and ſhews only a greater degeneracy by an abuſe of a moſt holy ordination.

THE prieſts under the law had an outward ſprinkling and waſhing; which was ſurely typical of inward purity: and without this, even the ambaſſadors for Chriſt are, with reſpect to themſelves, no more than the mini-

miniſters of a ritual, or phariſaical profeſſion.

And with reſpect to others, though it muſt be allowed, that the unworthineſs of the miniſter does not defeat the efficacy of God's ſacraments; yet it muſt be acknowledged and lamented, that where the ſin of the prieſt is great, men will abhor the ſacrifice of the Lord; the good from a pious prejudice, which we cannot ſo well blame, and the bad from a principle of ſelf-defence, which we can the leſs cenſure: the one will think leſs honourably, and the other will ſpeak more contemptibly of thoſe holy things about which the profane do miniſter.

The high prieſt under the law was conſecrated with the ointment of ſweet perfume: in alluſion to which, St. Paul ſpeaking of himſelf and the goſpel miniſtry, ſays, "now "thanks be unto God, which always cauſeth "us to triumph in Chriſt, and maketh ma-"nifeſt the ſavour of his knowledge by us "in

" in every place; for we are unto God a " ſweet ſavour of Chriſt." It is probably with an eye to the legal type and the goſpel completion of it, that the church is repreſented in the book of Canticles thus ſpeaking: " while the king ſitteth at his table, " my ſpikenard ſendeth forth the ſmell there- " of:" where by ſpikenard the learned and pious commentator underſtands the ſweet odour of the goſpel, wherewith the apoſtles by their preaching filled the world; together with the extraordinary holineſs of their lives, which ſo much recommended their preaching to all obſerving men. But an unſanctified prieſt is not an odour, but an offence; throws a ſtumbling-block in the way of the weak, and ſtrengthens the hands of the wicked. It is holineſs, that robe from heaven, which beſt becomes the perſon, and recommends the adminiſtrations of the prieſt; gives authority to his word, and dignity to his actions; " is an ornament " of grace to his head and chains about his neck, "

neck, and is like Aaron's coat for glory and for beauty.

A DIFFERENT, or rather a various ſenſe hath I confeſs, been given to the word, ſanctify, in the text: and it hath been underſtood by many, and ſome very learned men, * as a legal term implying a poſitive ſeparation to the work of the miniſtry, rather than a moral quality, or divine habit of the ſoul.

BUT whatever be the meaning of the letter, or alluſion to the legal conſecration, a real and vital ſanctity muſt be here underſtood and implied; for if chriſtians in general are commanded to be holy in all manner of converſation as he who hath called them is holy: if they are enjoined to "ſanctify "the Lord God in their hearts, and to "cleanſe themſelves from all filthineſs of "fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the "fear of God:" then aſſuredly a lower character,

* See particularly a Diſcourſe of Mr. Mede on this ſubject.

racter, and a leſs holy frame of ſpirit cannot be diſpenſed with, in thoſe who are appointed to feed the flock of Chriſt, and to be examples to believers in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, in purity; in thoſe who are God's builders, and ſtewards of his myſteries, and ordained of Chriſt for the edifying of his body, which is the church. For how ſhould we teach others the difference between the holy and profane, and cauſe them to diſcern between the unclean and the clean, if we ourſelves make no difference; with what ſucceſs ſhall we recommend a piety, which we diſdain to practiſe; or propoſe as the objects of other men's faith, what our conduct tells them, we ourſelves do not believe?

It is allowed that in the words following the text, "for them I ſanctify myſelf," our Lord does offer himſelf a ſacrifice for the conſecration of his miniſters under the new teſtament, in lieu of thoſe legal and typical ones, wherewith Aaron and his ſons, and the

the whole tribe of Levi were conſecrated to God's ſervice in the old. It ſhould therefore be further allowed that thoſe whom the Son hath made clean, are clean indeed. But grant that the nature of ſanctification does conſiſt principally in diſcernment or difference; in what ſhall the clergy be diſtinguiſhed and differenced but in ſuperior holineſs to other men. If ſanctification preciſely ſignifies, as the contenders for the legal ſenſe affirm, a ſeparation from other things by way of exaltation and pre-eminence, (as to ſanctify the ſabbath is to diſtinguiſh it from other days) how ſhall we maintain the pre-eminence of chriſtians in general, and of the chriſtian clergy in particular, if we diveſt them of a real and rational, though we may not aſcribe to them a perfect ſanctity?

THE apoſtles and miniſters of Chriſt are in different paſſages of ſacred writ, ſtiled the ſalt of the earth, burning and ſhining lights, ſtars, angels, and ambaſſadors of Chriſt;

Chriſt; but they would as ill anſwer thoſe titles, as they would diſcharge their proper offices, without a ſincere piety and intrinſic holineſs.

3. THAT inward ſanctity is here implyed, and not a mere poſitive ſeparation, may further appear by the inſtrument employed for this work of ſanctification. This is Truth or the Word of God. An outward ceremonial might have been ſufficient (as it was in an imperfect diſpenſation) to ſet apart even inanimate things to ſacred uſes: but where the word of truth is ſuppoſed to influence, it muſt be upon living ſouls, upon rational and moral agents. The apoſtles, and their ſucceſſors in the miniſtry, were not to be mere material utenſils, or dead members of the tabernacle, but pillars, which wiſdom (or the divine logos) heweth out, and which were to contribute to the edification, and by that to the ſupport of the church of Chriſt. "Ye alſo," ſays St. Peter, "as lively ſtones," (not

(not like the temple of Jeruſalem, a material edifice,) "are built up a ſpiritual houſe, an "holy prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacri- "fices, acceptable to God by Jeſus Chriſt." The prophet Malachi ſpeaking of the meſſen- ger of the covenant, and of the graces and mi- niſters of his future kingdom, ſays of him: "he ſhall ſit as a refiner and purifier of ſil- "ver; and he ſhall purify the ſons of Levi, "and purge them as gold and ſilver, that "they may offer unto the Lord an offering "in righteouſneſs."

BUT it is leſs neceſſary to enlarge upon this part of my diſcourſe, as they who contend for this diſtinction between being made holy, and being uſed as ſuch, or ſeparated to ſacred uſes, and think that the word, ſanctify, in the text, is applicable to the latter ſenſe, do after all allow, that the chriſtian church hath always taken it for granted, "that "thoſe of her clergy ought according to the "ſeparation and ſanctity of their order to "be diſtinguiſhed and differenced from other "chriſt-

"chriſtians by the ſanctity of their lives:" and that what in things ſacred, is their uſe, in perſons ſacred, is their converſation.

THE different interpretation commonly given to the remaining words of the text, "thy word is truth," from that of our Engliſh Bible is more material, and deſerves a more particular examination. By ſome, by many commentators, the word Truth, is here conſidered as an end, and not the means; as if our Lord had ſaid, ſanctify them to thy truth, or for the work of Evangeliſts. But our Engliſh tranſlation is, I conceive, very conſonant to grammar, and ſufficiently ſupported by the authority of other ſcriptures.

THE prepoſition here made uſe of, is frequently by the pureſt authors of antiquity applied in the ſenſe of our tranſlation, and prefixed to the inſtrument by which any thing is done:* and that it is properly here

* Vid. Blackhall, Vol. 1. p. 22.

to be ſo applied, may be evinced by the efficacy aſcribed to divine truth in other paſſages of the inſpired writers.

1. If David, who had but the ſhadow of good things, or ſaw them only afar off, and with an eye prophetic and reſpecting the whole covenant of God; if he could ſay, "Bleſſed are the undefiled in the way, "who walk in the law of the Lord: Bleſſ-"ed are they that keep his teſtimonies, and "ſeek him with their whole heart: they "alſo do no iniquity, they walk in his "ways: the law of the Lord is perfect, con-"verting the ſoul; the teſtimony of the "Lord is ſure, making wiſe the ſimple. "Order my ſteps in thy word, and let not "any iniquity have dominion over me: thy "word is very pure; thy righteouſneſs is "an everlaſting righteouſneſs, and thy law is "the truth." If the royal prophet could ſpeak with this holy confidence under the old diſpenſation, much more may we, who have the knowledge of God, and the terms of ſalvation

tion more fully and explicitly declared in the new.

"Now," ſays our Lord to his diſciples, "ye are clean, not in (ἐν) but through (διά) "the word, which I have ſpoken unto "you." Thus St. Paul tells the Epheſians, that "Chriſt loved the church and gave "himſelf for it, that he might ſanctifi- "fy and cleanſe it with the waſhing of "water, and by the word." The ſame apoſtle perſonally addreſſing the elders of the church of Epheſus, after giving them in charge, "to take heed unto themſelves, "and to all the flock, over which the Holy "Ghoſt had made them overſeers, to feed "the church of God, which he hath pur- "chaſed with his own blood," concludes with commending them "to God and to "the word of his grace, which," ſays he, "is able to build you up, and to give you "an inheritance among all them which are "ſanctified." And to the Theſſalonians he declares, "This is the will of God (i. e.

that to which all the commands of our Saviour tend) even your ſanctification." To the ſame purpoſe St. James tells us, "Of "his own will begat he us with the word "of truth, that we ſhould be a kind of firſt-"fruits of his creatures." Now regeneration is hardly diſtinguiſhable from ſanctification; for he that is regenerated is ſanctified. The apoſtle preſently after ſubjoins: "Receive with meekneſs the engrafted "word, which is able to ſave your ſouls." In the former of theſe paſſages, by the firſt-fruits are plainly to be underſtood the faithful; the nobleſt part of God's creatures; ſanctified and ſanctifying the reſt. In the latter the metaphor "engrafted," does elegantly expreſs the manner of this operation of the word of grace; its incorporation with our ſtock of nature, its influence upon all our faculties, and thence producing different qualities and nobler fruits than could be effected by our old man. Our Lord himſelf had before much to the ſame purpoſe told the Jews: "If ye continue in my word,

"then

" then are ye my diſciples indeed: and ye " ſhall know the truth, and the truth ſhall " make you free;" i. e. free from ſin and the corruption of nature; free from the yoke of the letter, and the ceremonies of the law, from types and ſhadows, to truth and righteouſneſs. And in the parable of the ſower, our Lord aſcribes the different proficiency of his hearers, to the different reception they gave to, and the care they uſed in the cultivation of the divine word: and thoſe only he diſtinguiſhes as his mother and his brethren, who hear the word of God and do it.

II.

2. THAT the word or truth of God is able by the ordinary aſſiſtance of the ſpirit to produce theſe bleſſed fruits, will appear by conſidering the nature,

1. OF truth in general,
2. OF divine truth in particular.

1. TRUTH in general is properly the conſtitution of things in themſelves, and the relation they bear to each other in the creation of God: a knowledge of that conſtitution and of this relation is a knowledge of the truth.

TRUTH reſpecting man the enquirer, may be divided into natural and revealed.

TRUTH natural, is in itſelf the eſſence, habitude and relation of all things that exiſt. With reſpect to us, it is ſuch a knowledge of that eſſence, habitude and relation, as is attainable by the proper and beſt uſe of our natural faculties. Truth in itſelf is univerſal and perfect; in us it is partial and defective; for our faculties are not commenſurate to the whole of things: we can neither analyſe their eſſences, nor pervade the world of ſpirits, nor perfectly comprehend the firſt Author and end of being. But as far as we can tread in the ſteps of nature; as far as we can carry our views through

through the eſſence and relation of things, ſo far we may be ſaid to have attained to truth. Yet ſtill all truth attainable is not alike important, enlarging, and ennobling to the mind of man; is not properly ſanctifying. There is a knowledge of numbers and mechanical powers, which being mechanically applied, and made ſubſervient to common and momentary ends, does not much enrich the human ſoul. There is a knowledge of nature, which when purſued out of vanity or curioſity, brings little aid to the great ſcience of religion. The naturaliſt or mathematician may multiply numbers, analyſe matter and purſue an atom in infinitum, and yet all this while not diveſt the mind of one vicious prejudice, nor bring any ſignal advantage to the morals of mankind or glory to their Maker.* There is

* Lord Bolingbroke, the greateſt recommender of natural philoſophy, as laying the true and only foundation of natural theology, confeſſes, that Democritus ſpent his whole life, and he lived to be more than a hundred years of age,

a different nature in different truths as in different foods; while ſome weaken, impoveriſh, or debauch, others ſtrengthen and enrich the conſtitution of the recipient. The moſt important truths muſt be thoſe which are moſt intereſting; abſtract theorems, that have no relation to life and practice, are but one remove from falſhood, with reſpect to any advantage they bring to the enquirer: for it makes little difference, whether the mind is engaged to a wrong purpoſe, or to none. There is no true wiſdom in the purſuit, where there is no rational good propoſed as the end of our knowledge: at leaſt the attainment of that knowledge ſhould be deemed the moſt valuable, which

age, in a conſtant application to experimental philoſophy: yet the philoſopher it ſeems made too little mention, or no mention at all of the Supreme Being; and his Lordſhip thonght that if he did not acknowledge the unity of a firſt intelligent cauſe, his ignorance, nay his denial of God was pitiable. Vol. 4, 4to. p. 134. And, p. 255, he ſays, The true foundation of natural theology muſt be laid in natural philoſophy.

which is productive of the greateſt good. Hence the ſcience of morals has had that general eſteem and cultivation, as to become an eſſential part of almoſt every ſyſtem of philoſophy. It is indeed of a far nobler order than phyſiology; as the movements of the mind, and the meaſures of duty and means of happineſs are of far greater conſequence for us to know than the properties of matter, the inmoſt conſtitution of ſubſtances, the mechaniſm of bodies, the laws of motion, the ratio of numbers, the motion of the planets, and the other parts of phyſical enquiry. Moral truth, our knowledge and proper application of it, is what diſtinguiſhes, and gives the trueſt dignity to man. When we are arrived to that degree of wiſdom, which comprehends the truth of our own, and of the caſe of thoſe about us, which points out our conſtitution and our connections, which forms the true diſtinction between good and evil, between ſenſe and ſpirit, and the ſubordination due from that to this: when we make this know-

ledge

ledge of ourſelves and others practical, and purſue happineſs in no other way than that of our rational duty; or in other words, when the underſtanding is rightly informed, and the will vigorouſly purſues ſuch right information, then are we ſanctified by the truth; we walk in the paths of God and nature, we comport with our conſtitution and the conſtitution of the world; we are veſſels of honour, as diſcharging the office which the Author of our being has aſſigned us; we are holy in all our conduct, as doing and ſuffering nothing, but in conformity to the will of God; we anſwer the intention of our all-wiſe Maker; man is an echo to the voice of God, and the earth revolves in harmony with the courſe and will of heaven.

But it is to be confeſſed and lamented, that this high moral perfection, this accuracy of knowledge, and rectitude in action was never yet attained by mere mortal man, or by the force of mere natural abilities. The wiſdom of the wiſeſt has been partial, and

and the practice of the beſt imperfect; prejudice having generally mingled with their enquiries after truth, and paſſion perverted them in the courſe of duty. The hiſtory of antient philoſophy and philoſophers is a ſtanding teſtimony of human deficiency in the ſcience of true religion; which while it is the beſt confutation of the confident pretences of modern unbelievers, does moſt illuſtriouſly diſplay,

2. THE benefit and neceſſity of divine truth.

1. THAT this, and this only is the proper means of ſanctification, we might argue upon preſumption, from the propriety of ſuch a medium:* for were we in power able

* LORD BOLINGBROKE himſelf acknowledges, that "we "are in abſolute ignorance of the real eſſence and inward "conſtitution of every ſenſible object: How much leſs rea-"ſon is there to expect any knowledge of the manner of "being, and of the nature and eſſence of the inviſible God, "or of his phyſical and moral attributes, beyond that which "his

able to help, in knowledge ſufficient to inform ourſelves, the attributes of God reſpecting us, would be either unknown or unacknowledged. Could we work out our own ſalvation, ſo as to exclude God from working in us either to will or to do, his adorable goodneſs exhibited in any ſcheme of redemption, would be abſurd and uſeleſs.

Could

" his works, the effects of his nature and attributes commu-
" nicate to us." Vol. 4, 4to. p. 86. His lordſhip's argument reduced to conſiſtency is no more than this: We (men by reaſon and natural abilities) are in abſolute ignorance of the real eſſence and inward conſtitution of every viſible object—an ignorance confeſſedly of no importance or prejudice; therefore we are not to expect by revelation any knowledge of the being or attributes of God—a knowledge confeſſedly of the utmoſt conſequence! We are by nature blind, and therefore ought to continue ſo! God has diſcovered his exiſtence one way, and therefore can make no diſcovery of his nature in any other: Though he has allowed elſewhere, that there are various applications of the one eternal reaſon: by which he muſt allow, that the eternal reaſon, or God, has various ways of applying himſelf to his creatures: and except he can confine God to natural operations, we may ſtill know him by other manifeſtations, which will, when manifeſted, be no leſs his works, than the former.

Could we ſanctify ourſelves, we ſhould owe no thanks to the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort. Self-ſufficiency is, and always will be the parent of infidelity and impiety. It was ſo in heaven, and ſo it was in paradiſe.

2. As revelation ſhould be, ſo we may preſume upon the ſuppoſition of any given, that it would be properly ſanctifying: the communications of God to man muſt in the laſt reſort, be agreeable to the real truth and conſtitution of things. His words, would like his works, be conſiſtent and harmonious; and anſwer to thoſe works, like types to their antitypes, or juſt concluſions drawn from true and real premiſſes. Revelation would be a comment upon nature; God's own comment upon his own works: what is contained and implied in the one, would be more explicity declared by the other. Infinite holineſs cannot deceive; infinite wiſdom cannot be deceived: the divinity of the law would warrant its purity; as now its purity proves its divinity. For,

3. We

3. We need not argue upon preſumption; we may appeal to the contents of the ſacred code, and eaſily evince, that they call us not to uncleanneſs, but unto holineſs.*

In order to our ſanctification it is,

1. Neceſſary that the ſoul ſhould not be without knowledge: for from abſurd principles can never be formed right and rational practices. Now as by the material light we know the difference of ſenſible objects, ſo by the ſpiritual light of heaven, we underſtand moral offices and ends, our internal conſtitution, our higheſt intereſts, our relation to God, his attributes, and the way of his true worſhip. That theſe are to be found in the word of God, and there only, is evident from this ſhort poſition of the moſt eaſy proof: "that no ſuch diſplay of the "attributes of God, nor any ſuch delineation "of the duty of man, can be produced from "any, or from all the ſages of Greece and "Egypt,

* Vid. Lucas's Practical Chriſtianity and Fowler's Deſign of Chriſtianity.

" Egypt, or from the united wiſdom of the " world, whilſt unenlightened by divine re- " velation." All that has been advanced in contradiction to this, is no more than confident aſſertion, not only without, but againſt all proof or probability, and advanced from the reform both of the heathen religion and philoſophy after the publication of chriſtianity.

THERE cannot be a greater proof of the inſufficiency of reaſon in religious enquiries, than the abſurdities advanced by the heathen philoſophers, concerning that firſt and cleareſt deduction of all others, that firſt philoſophy as it is called, the Exiſtence of God. The firſt book of Tully concerning the nature of the gods is anſwer ſufficient to all the ſpecious arguments of infidelity upon this point: and God may purpoſely ſeem to have let the reaſoner wander ſo far out of the way, to teach him, or at leaſt others by his example, the benefit and neceſſity of divine truth to ſet them right again. The opinions

opinions of the ancients concerning this plaineſt point in the world, as here given us, are rather the dreams of dotards, or the reveries of madmen, than the judgments of philoſophers, and the ſentiments of ſages.

It is unhappy, that we have the evidence of profeſſing, as well as aliens and ſtrangers to the rectitude of divine truth: but even truth abuſed and miſapplied does but the more recommend its genuine uſe and application. Look around upon the different denominations of chriſtians, and ſee in proportion to the deviation of each from the truth, the greateſt abſurdity in opinions, and the groſſeſt impurity in practice. Among men, who call themſelves by the holy name of Chriſt, we have beheld romancers in the philoſophy of nature, heretics in divinity, enthuſiaſts in devotion, and idolaters in practice; we have beheld perſecution miſtaken for zeal; ſuperſtition for piety, and ſingularity for conſcience. It was owing to a deviation from God's truth, that we

we have had in the different ages of his church, gnoſtics, antinomians, rabbies, fanatics, imyſtics, phariſees, papiſts and predeſtinarians; whilſt the rule of divine truth, had it been honeſtly applied, would have expoſed and reduced every obliquity in theory, as effectually as the ſame application of the divine moral would have reſtrained every enormity in practice. For it muſt be further obſerved,

2. THAT knowledge alone does not ſanctify. The word of truth therefore ſuggeſts every, the moſt proper motive to influence the will and affections; points out the beſt advocate to intercede for, and the moſt powerful mediator to help our infirmities. The tremendous attributes of God exhibited in ſacred writ, particularly his juſtice and ſevere holineſs in requiring no leſs a ſacrifice than the Son of his love as a ſatisfaction for the ſins of a fallen world; the love of this immaculate Lamb, who died to preſent us pure and ſpotleſs to his Father; the

purity exacted from our bodies that they may be temples of the holy ſpirit here, and that they may be meet inhabitants of a holy heaven hereafter. The ſcheme of divine providence laid before the birth of time, and carried on through ages and generations for this great and laſt end; our deliverance from corruption into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God; theſe among many others, are arguments purely chriſtian, and which moſt ſtrongly enjoin us to be holy, as he who hath called us is holy. Whilſt the abſurdity of the pagan theology, the futility of a pagan faith, and the imperfection of a pagan moral are eaſily diſcernible; whilſt the licentiouſneſs permitted by mahomet to his followers on earth, and promiſed as their reward in heaven, betrays both the art and luſt of the compoſer of the koran; we may challenge our enemies to point out to us the ſame marks of impure falſhood in the religion of Jeſus; and to ſhew, wherein he has either by precept or example contributed to the corruption of mankind.

But the true commendation of the divine word does not conſiſt in its negative excellence, in its freedom from error in the doctrinal, and impurity in the preceptive part; it contains the ſublimeſt, as well as the moſt faultleſs theology, and enjoins the pureſt as well as the moſt faultleſs moral; it diſplays a wiſdom, by which the wiſeſt may learn, and a moral by which the moſt virtuous may improve; if it finds us blind, it affords the moſt glorious light; if it finds us weak, it adminiſters Almighty ſtrength; if it ſhews our meanneſs, at the ſame time it manifeſts our greatneſs, and explains both our corruption and glory; while it laments our infirmity, it ſupplies the cure, and if it diſcovers the cauſe of our lapſe, it alſo preſcribes the means of our recovery. The one true God, our creator and preſerver; our redeemer and ſanctifier; a law holy, juſt and good; the love of God held out for our motive, and the glory of God for the end of our actions; the judgment of God for our trial, and the kingdom of God for our re-

ward, and all exhibited in ſuch plain and indiſputable characters in the word of God, preſent ſuch objects to our faith, ſuch life to our hopes, and ſuch alarms to our fears; do ſuch honour to the wiſdom, goodneſs and holineſs of God, and ſo well conſult the peace, the virtue, the dignity, and happineſs of man; theſe are in ſhort ſuch means and motives to ſanctification, that greater could not be given, without doing violence to our moral liberty, and blaſpheming the attributes of heaven.

Such is divine Truth: the beſt gift of God to man in a ſtate of nature; the philoſophy of heaven in a mortal dreſs; the glory of the Father manifeſted in and by the Son; the medium, by which alone we truly view ourſelves and others, nature and God; things mortal and immortal, the life that now is, and that which is to come. Revealed Truth is the effulgence of God himſelf illuminating his own works: it is the wiſdom of God, extending knowledge beyond

beyond the faculty of reaſon; it is the power of God, exalting virtue beyond the efforts of nature. Divine Truth is a tranſcript of divine perfection, fitted to raiſe, or renew in man a divine image, and to advance him to a divine happineſs: it is the living bread coming down from heaven, which gives to the feeder the habitude for, and taſte of heaven: deſtroys what is noxious, heals what is broken, enlightens what is dark, and quickens what is dead in our frame and conſtitution; that ſpiritualizes our natural powers, and improves mortal to divine; "If any man eat of this bread, ſays our "Lord, he ſhall live for ever."

In ſaying all this, I ſay no more than what hiſtory and fact will juſtify: our holy religion did for ſome ages actually exert this ſuperior power, and awe the conſcience by conviction, when it had not the civil and eccleſiaſtical power to lean on, nor the forcible influence of education to ſupport it. If it does not ſtill anſwer, it is not owing

to the nature of divine truth, but to man's miſapplication and neglect of it; and he who objects to its authority from its ſuppoſed inſufficiency, muſt upon his own principles give up his natural theology, as well as reject the revealed.

I CANNOT but add that thoſe perſons have the leaſt room to complain of this little efficacy of chriſtianity, who have done their utmoſt to promote it; and that (ſo immutable is the veracity of God) theſe very men who have diſputed the authority of revelation, have in this inſtance remarkably proved it; their conduct has been generally immoral, becauſe their faith was not divine; the ſplendor of God's holy truth has appeared to more advantage through the impurity of their lives who have denied it.

BUT it is time I ſhould have done; and we may ſeem partial to ourſelves, ſhould we not extend this obſervation to chriſtians in general, and to the chriſtian clergy in particular.

particular. If infidelity is productive of immorality, believers ſhould in like manner manifeſt their better principles by a ſuitable practice, and be holy as he who hath called them is holy. May then that wiſdom which is from above, and is firſt pure, be juſtified of all her children? The moſt effectual way to recommend divine truth, is to give it that place in our hearts, which will regulate our opinions, and influence our conduct; when the word of God is as it were incorporated with our frame, and flows forth in our words and actions, it ſtrikes the beholder with irreſiſtible force, and like the material light of heaven, manifeſts all its properties and powers by the reflection. "We all," ſays the apoſtle, (ſpeaking of himſelf and his fellow-labourers in the miniſtry) "with open face, be-
"holding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord,
"are changed into the ſame image; from
"glory to glory, even as by the ſpirit of
"the Lord." And again, "God, who
"commanded the light to ſhine out of

" darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, to " give the light of the knowledge of the " glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt." By one who is a ſtranger to the ſpirit of the goſpel, and denies the promulgation of the law, it muſt be confeſſed, this reaſoning of the apoſtle may be termed cabaliſtical cant, or madneſs and unintelligible jargon; but to us it ſhould appear the words of truth and ſoberneſs. The apoſtle here plainly alludes to the hiſtory of Moſes, whoſe face was enlightened by, and reflected back the feebler rays of divinity, communicated to him by a faint exhibition of the heavenly majeſty, or angel preſence, ſuſtaining the perſon of God. " For," thus ſays the apoſtle, " if the miniſtration of condemna- " tion be glory, much more doth the mi- " niſtration of righteouſneſs exceed in glory; " For even that which was made glorious, " had not glory in this reſpect, by reaſon " of the glory that excelleth; For if that " which is done away, was glorious, much " more that which remaineth is glorious."

As

As if the apoſtle had ſaid; thus and much more, do the ſervants of the miniſtration of the ſpirit, receive and reflect the glory of the Lord. Chriſt is the mirror of that glory, and does by his clear and large communications of the knowledge of God in his goſpel, transform his apoſtles into the ſame image; they too as mirrors repreſent the glory of the Lord, and are as it were images of Chriſt, as Chriſt is of God: or in other words, the face or appearance of Chriſt is that glaſs, in which all the glory of God is diſcerned by us, derived upon us, and reflected by us.

A SENTIMENT great and godlike, which while it raiſes, does not intoxicate human nature; and while it brings down God to man, does not detract from the divine perfections. "We have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." We are but darkneſs, and it is that omnipotent word that commanded "let there be light and there was light," that alone

ſhineth

ſhineth in our hearts. This light is not peculiar to, or inherent in ourſelves; it is given, to be communicated; implanted, to be diffuſed; and revealed to us, to be made known by us. "We preach not ourſelves, "but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and ourſelves "your ſervants for Jeſus' ſake."

I NEED not add, at leaſt I need not to enlarge upon what naturally reſults from, or is rather contained and implied in the apoſtle's words; that we muſt receive the glory of God by Chriſt before we can reflect it; we muſt know our own hearts to be enlightened, before we can effectually enlighten others: and "be ourſelves ſanctified through "the truth," before we can "by manifeſta-"tion of the truth commend ourſelves to e-"very man's conſcience in the ſight of God."

I WOULD not hereby be ſuppoſed to intimate, that the face of every miniſter of the goſpel, ſhould by his communication with God, ſhine like that of Moſes, or

of

of the Martyr Stephen, when he ſaw the heavens opened, and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God; but this however may be admitted, and ſhould be inſiſted upon, that where the ſeed or divine word has taken the deepeſt root, there it ought to produce the beſt and faireſt fruits, and of a higher colour, taſte and flavour, than the productions of mere nature; and which ſhould diffuſe grace and fragrance, beauty and ſweetneſs, a divine complacency and heavenly radiance round them: or in other words, that perſons ſet apart by preparatory ſtudies, by profeſſion, and ſolemn engagements to ſearch, to underſtand, to explain and enforce divine truth, and to call men to virtue and glory, ſhould diſtinguiſh themſelves in their own life and practice, as emulous of truth, virtue, and glory; and that they who by their miniſtrations public and private, are making daily approaches to the throne of a pure and holy God, ſhould contract a divine temper and ſpirit from this divine converſe,

INNOCENCY of life, the confidence and courage of faith and a good conſcience, complacency of manners, and an enlarged benevolence to mankind, the ſerenity of conſcious peace, elevation of ſentiment, and modeſt retreat from the pomps and pleaſures of the world; immortal hopes, communion with God, and our converſation in heaven, as they are the genuine effects, ſo they will be the ſtrongeſt bulwark of divine truth, and a more powerful charm againſt the envenomed darts of the unbeliever, than all the mere genius and learning of the univerſe, and will ſpeak louder and more effectually, than the tongues of men and angels combined in its defence.

DISCOURSE III.

LUKE x. 41. 42.

And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful; and Mary hath choſen that good part which ſhall not be taken away from her.

THE objects in human life are many, and hence the purſuits of mankind are various. A peculiar temper puts every man upon the purſuit of ſome ſeeming good: and paſſion is ſure to find, or always at work to form ſome real or imaginary happineſs.

happineſs. Though the objects differ in value and real worth, yet we may commonly obſerve them purſued with the ſame warmth and eagerneſs; and whether love of place, title, eaſe or gold has got poſſeſſion of the human heart, like ſome tyrannical uſurper, it is ſure to over-power and dethrone all the other paſſions. Sometimes indeed different paſſions take the reins by turns, and inconſtant man is carried away with every wind. Unhappy proſpect in both caſes; whether he is poſſeſſed by one evil ſpirit or by a legion; whether reaſon is dethroned by one or more uſurpers; whether religion and the true intereſts of the ſoul are ſupplanted by one or more pretenders! Unhappy proſpect to ſee men catching at every ſhadow of bliſs, while our moſt ſubſtantial happineſs is neglected, and we are reſtleſſly labouring to gratify imaginary wants, while the "one thing needful" is overlooked or neglected!

Not that this chriſtian rule is abſolute, nor

nor is this "one thing needful" intended to exclude all other care, and ſhut out all other concerns. Such is our frame and ſituation, that we cannot be ſuppoſed inſenſible or dead to all the innocent pleaſures of life; as we are men, we cannot be entirely free from cares and paſſions; without ſome induſtry and application, the generality would want bread to eat, and raiment to put on; the neceſſary wants of nature muſt be regarded, God has provided for them, and we are guilty of injuſtice to ourſelves, and ingratitude to God, when we reject his mercies; we deprive ourſelves of what he intended for our preſervation, and rob him of the praiſe and thanks due to his loving-kindneſs.

AGAIN, the relation we bear to our fellow-creatures, will neceſſarily engage us in the buſineſs of the world. As parents or maſters, as magiſtrates or ſubjects, we are obliged in our ſeveral ſtations to promote the

the ends of ſociety, and advance the common good. But ſtill, whatever be our buſineſs or concern in this world, we may ſanctify it by a juſt and fair proſecution of it; and by conſidering it as but the means of ſomething better, as the lower ſteps to our high and heavenly end. Our cares are then only faulty, when they interfere with our immortal intereſts; if we keep not our main end in view, all our other employment is but impertinence or doing nothing. If our preſent deſigns and labours exclude the thoughts of heaven and futurity, we are doing worſe than nothing; or if we but regard the buſineſs of religion, with the ſame degree of ſpirit as we purſue the common advantages of life, we miſplace our affections; we divide our hearts between God and mammon, and ſet an equal value upon earth and heaven. In this caſe, having two ends in view, we can purſue neither ſteadily, or with proper vigour; we make two things needful, when God has made but one; religion is not our firſt and chief

chief care, but the world is allowed to rival it in our hearts, and equally to ſhare our affections.

THESE words of the text then, are only to be conſidered as expreſſive of that greater regard we ought to pay to the momentous intereſts of the ſoul, than to any natural or civil advantages. As if Chriſt had ſaid; "There are many things in life that will "challenge ſome part of your care, and em- "ploy ſome part of your time and thoughts: "but nothing ſo worthy of your regard, no- "thing ſo truly deſerving the purſuit of a "rational being, as religion. This one "thing is, above all others, needful."

THE reaſonableneſs of which chriſtian precept will appear, if we conſider what man truly is, of what little value are his beſt attainments; how mean and inſignificant are the boaſted privileges he has from nature, from fortune, from ſociety, or civil accompliſhments; in ſhort, how poor is

the end of all his labours excluſive of religion.

1. SUPPOSE, for inſtance, we take up with the pleaſures of ſenſe, we take up with the pleaſures of a brute, and cancel the diſtinguiſhing part of our nature. With the prodigal we reduce ourſelves to live on huſks, when we might eat the bread of angels. The pleaſures of ſenſe are not indeed foreign to human nature, but human nature is fallen. Senſual pleaſures took their riſe from our corruption, and end in corruption: they pleaſe the body, but with the body they periſh in the grave. Had Adam not known ſin, he had not known mortality: we are ſtill ſinful, and therefore ſtill mortal. The pleaſures of ſenſe are the proofs of our frailty, not the glory of our nature; they are rather our reproach, than our glory. To touch, to taſte, to ſee, to hear, are mere animal functions; but moral qualities are the ornament of a man; heavenly graces are the perfection of a chriſtian. If we va-

lue

lue ourſelves on account of our ſenſes, a brute has more to boaſt of; when we glory in our paſſions, we glory in our ſhame; they are only fitted to our preſent fallen ſtate, but will have no place in the region of pure ſpirits.

THEY who affect to live agreeable to ſenſe and nature, ſeem not to underſtand their true conſtitution, or to conſult their main intereſt, or the happineſs of their better part; for without religion nature in its richeſt productions is but poor, and life enjoyed with all the benefits of refinement, is but wretched. Man's ſoul is immortal, and cannot feaſt on nature, or ſocial life; was it an earthly principle, it would ſeek no other clime, it would find reſt at home, and not pine in its proper element. But nature is nature; produces and ſupports natural beings; but grows no moral, imparts no grace; affords a ſufficiency and a home for irrationals; but is death to the ſoul, envies its ſuperior excellence, and is an enemy to its immortal intereſts. In proportion as we live to na-

ture, we die to grace: as we die to nature, we live to God. A ſlave to nature is a ſlave to death. Nature in its principles is mortal, and can only gratify its kindred powers, the mortal principles of man. It can feed his eye, his ear, his taſte or ſmell, ſenſes periſhable; like the ſubſtance on which they feed. To indulge to nature proves no virtue, argues no courage, gives no triumph. It regales the body, it ſtarves the ſoul; it chains us down to earth; it draws us from ſpiritual perfection, it ſeparates us from heaven and ſhuts out from our ſight the kingdom of ſpirits. Nature indulged is paſſion heightened, is reaſon darkened, is ſpirit confined, and the heavenly principle of man benumbed and brutalized. Nature indulged is death haſtened, and immortality renounced.

2. If from ſenſe and nature we proceed to conſider the more refined pleaſures of reaſon, the powers of genius, and the capacity of the human mind; even theſe when exer-

exercised in arts, and employed in learned researches, are but useless faculties, if they bring no glory to God, nor good to mankind.

To make uncommon advances in literature and speculative science has often more of shew than solidity; it is attended with labour and anxiety in the acquisition, and too often with pride in the possession; and if it brings applause, it also brings envy to the professor and proficient; at the same time it frequently leads men to the neglect of the practical duties of the social and christian life. It is most agreeable to our notions of a good God, to imagine his will our best practice, his law our best knowledge, and his light our best direction; and that what is most edifying, useful, and salutary, is, like our daily bread, most obvious and common. Refined conceits and new long-laboured theories, are frequently no better than our imported, far-fetched luxuries, more shewy than useful; and

which rather debauch, than ſupport or ſtrengthen nature.

MAN, by his make and ſituation, ſeems rather formed for doing and ſuffering than ſpeculating. And God by the limited faculties he has given us, ſeems to have made laboured reſearches into mere ſpeculative ſcience no eſſential duty. The buſineſs of ſalvation, man's chief buſineſs, is better and more ſucceſsfully carried on by honeſt hearts, than refined heads, that what is the buſineſs of all (ſo great is God's goodneſs!) might be eaſily attainable by all, Science, unconnected with duty, promotes no intereſt of the ſoul, nor at all helps forward the buſineſs of ſalvation. And even religious knowledge, not founded on, or connected with, not ſupporting or ſupported by the Bible, is as uſeleſs and inſignificant. The only true wiſdom is that which God approves; which will make us uſeful to mankind, eaſy to ourſelves here, and happy hereafter. We were

were ſent into the world to be good, not learned; for uſe, and not for oſtentation; to ſubdue paſſions, to improve the ſoul, and rightly to direct the will; not to exerciſe the wit, and gratify vain curioſity. True wiſdom is of the active kind; and he who is employed in doing his duty, that is, in acting agreeable to the dictates of reaſon, and the laws of God, is doing mankind the beſt ſervice, and beſt conſulting his own peace and his Maker's glory. This man lives truth, while others are but ſeeking it. The applauſe given to a wit, or to a man of deep erudition, by the united acclamations of all mankind, is trifling and light, when balanced with the approbation of God and a good conſcience, and the proſpect of a bleſſed eternity. Though we could ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels, yet if we are ſtrangers to that knowledge that maketh wiſe unto ſalvation, we but ſow the wind and ſhall reap the whirlwind.

3. EQUALLY inſignificant are all other attainments, intereſts, or pleaſures that baniſh religion from our thoughts, and God out of the world. A man that prides himſelf in his riches or honours, is a deſpicable wretch, when he forgets God the author and giver of all good gifts. Such a man muſt forget the deſign and end of his coming into the world, which was to practiſe piety and virtue, not merely to accumulate honours and wealth. To deſpiſe theſe has been always eſteemed in the eye of reaſon and religion, the trueſt greatneſs; as to ſlight every thing temporal in compariſon of a happineſs that is eternal, muſt be judged the trueſt wiſdom.

No advantages of honour or fortune are in themſelves at all meritorious, or praiſeworthy. God is a holy Being, and nothing can be ſo acceptable to him as an honeſt and good heart. 'One good action is in his ſight more precious than gold, yea, "than much fine gold." Amongſt men indeed, diſtinction,

tinction, pre-eminence and place may create dependents and admirers; but God ſeeth not as man ſeeth. Our Maker and Judge had dealt with us unjuſtly, had each man's merit been allowed to riſe with his fortunes and honours. It had then been as difficult for a poor man, as the goſpel has declared it is for a rich man, to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But all God's ways are equal: he has made virtue the common ſtandard of merit; (by merit I mean only the condition of God's acceptance) and this is equally attainable by all. Any man may have a good conſcience, and this alone is in the ſight of God of great price. God is no reſpecter of perſons. Heaven is open to all. To gain admiſſion there, no titles or honours will avail. Theſe muſt be left behind, and virtue is the only key that will open to us thoſe everlaſting doors. "Let none of us "then think of himſelf more highly than he "ought to think:" the richeſt and mightieſt of mortals has nothing which he did not receive, nothing which he muſt not part with.

with. And let no man think more lowly of himſelf than he ought to think. The pooreſt among us are the children of God, and may inherit a crown of glory. Any of us may be honeſt and ſober, may fear God, and ſay our prayers. The worſt of our enemies cannot debar us of the practice, nor deprive us of the happy influence and infinite rewards of religion. We may ſend up a prayer from a jail or a cottage. God is every where preſent. The riches of his grace, like the bleſſings of his providence in the natural world, are common to all. While religion rules in our hearts, we can want nothing, though we have nothing. Religion is plenty in want: it is light in darkneſs: it is life in death; it is divinity in fleſh and blood; it is ſtrength in weakneſs; it is heaven on earth. It is a portion of the God-head imparted to man; it is immortality and eternity commenced on earth. This then is that one pearl of great price, which is well purchaſed, though at the ex-

pence

pence and with the loſs of all we have. There is an end of all other perfection, but God's mercies, or the comforts of religion never fail. Whatever elſe is the object of envy and admiration among men, whether it be immenſe wealth, it ſhall fail; whether it be heroic virtue and noble titles, they ſhall ceaſe; whether it be great parts or knowledge, they ſhall vaniſh away. But our good works can never die; theſe alone will ſurvive, and appear with us at the reſurrection.

YET notwithſtanding the vanity of human attainments, we ſtill continue the purſuit of them, as if they were the beſt, and indeed the only gifts worth coveting. We ſtudy, we build, we plant, we project, we purchaſe, though death is at the door, and is every moment advancing upon us; and what will all our labours profit us when we are once laid low in the grave? They may remain indeed; but remain like Abſalom's pillar, the monuments of our folly.

To ſay of a man, when he is dead as we frequently hear it ſaid, that he left ſuch an eſtate, was a great maſter in ſuch an art, that he was favourite to a prince and was buried among kings, is poor comfort to duſt and aſhes. The qualities of the body, the favours of fortune, or the profeſſion of arts are but a mockery on the naked ſoul. When indeed our good qualities or great fortunes are directed to the glory of God, and the good of mankind, they are then morally good, and will entitle us to the reward of moral agents. Arts and learning, when employed in the public ſervice, and riches when expended in public uſes, will entitle the poſſeſſors to the rewards of charity and beneficence; but any human acquiſitions not thus directed or employed, are rather a foundation for our future miſery, than preſent good; they will render us obnoxious to God's judgments for not employing them as he directed and intended: all our beſt capacities and endowments are not in themſelves at all meritorious; in our application

of

of them only we can be ſaid to ſhew ſome degree of merit. Reaſon and reflection are valuable bleſſings, but no virtues, we make them ſuch by our conduct and management of them; if they are entirely engroſſed by human cares and ſecular projects, they are perverted; we are not benefitted by their uſe, but anſwerable to God for our abuſe of them; they would lead us to heaven, but we confine them to earth; we fix them on the creature, when they would direct us to our Creator; we employ them on momentary projects, when they would point out the road to eternal joy.

NAY, what paſſes among mankind for moral virtue will be too frequently found, upon enquiry, to have no relation to the one thing needful; it is a melancholy proſpect to look into the world and ſee ſo many men, though not abandoned or groſs offenders, yet ſo far removed from that righteouſneſs, which the goſpel requires: free indeed from thoſe flaming vices which diſtinguiſh the

the mighty ſinner, but without thoſe eminent virtues which ſhould grace and adorn the chriſtian profeſſor; if they are honeſt in their dealings, it is to preſerve their credit; if they are ſober, it is to preſerve their health; if they are induſtrious, it is to raiſe a fortune.

THAT there are ſuch men in the world, is no breach of charity to ſuppoſe; for we may ſee daily inſtances of men honeſt, ſober, and induſtrious, yet in other proſpects, acting with a temper and ſpirit in direct oppoſition to all the elements of the chriſtian religion. But let ſuch men know, that when their good qualities are thus directed to ſecular ends, they cannot in right or reaſon expect the reward of chriſtian virtue: that if their labours and cares are confined to this life, they are not thereby entitled to the bleſſings of the next. Whatever actions are done, unleſs they are done from principles of conſcience or religion, cannot be pleaſing or meritorious, (I mean acceptable) in the ſight

ſight of God. A wrong intention detracts from the goodneſs of the action; and he that profeſſes himſelf a ſervant of mammon, cannot be the friend of God; by the order and ſettled laws of nature, he may reap the fruits of his induſtry, temperance and honeſty; but as he never ſought, he cannot in reaſon expect any extraordinary mercies at God's hand. A virtue that is merely conſtitutional, is but a more refined inſtinct: a virtue that is built on pride and a ſenſe of honour, is no more than a compliment to our friends and the world; a virtue that is directed to private and mercenary ends, is no more than a fair bargain; I ſpeak not this to diſcredit virtue, or the common principles on which it is built, for even theſe are ſuch as God has fitted to our nature, and are of great ſervice to the world; but then they extend no farther than the world, nor are they intentionally directed to the glory of God and the good of mankind.

Such men would do well to conſider, whether

whether their virtue would be leſs ſteady, if God was ſuppoſed a ſpectator of their actions, as well as men? Whether their intereſts would be leſs ſecure, if providence was ſuppoſed to protect them? Whether their prudence would be called in queſtion ſhould they provide for a future ſtate of being, as well as the preſent, and with the ſame labour carry on the intereſts of both worlds?

But the great misfortune is, that preſent and ſenſible objects engroſs the human affections, and heaven by its abſence loſes all its value; and though nothing can be more ſure or more important than the eternal truths of religion, yet is nothing leſs attended to: we are daily forming projects, and ſeeking for happineſs in every ſoil, but where God and nature have planted it: Appearances miſlead us; eſtates and titles, and glitter, and pomp, and pleaſure, are the phantoms that enſnare unwary man, and though ſtill deluded he ſtill purſues: a death-bed only unveils the maſk that covers his

his eyes, and ſhews him on what feeble foundations he has built his happineſs: will titles now ſupport his drooping ſoul? Or will his greatneſs be now able to diſarm the powers of death and of hell? Will the breath of ſycophants diſpel the diſmal gloom that hangs upon his mind? Will obſervance and flatteries now charm down pain and agony, and lull the conſcience aſleep? Or is not the remembrance of fair and virtuous deeds, the only opium that can aſſuage his pain, that can make him reſigned in ſickneſs, and confident even under the pangs of death? Nothing can more ſtrongly recommend the purſuit of the one thing needful, or a ſincere application to the duties of religion, than the condition of a great wicked man, when he comes to die. The man of pleaſure, the man of wealth, the great, the powerful, the noble, are now vain titles, and ſerve but to render his littleneſs the more conſpicuous. A good chriſtian in rags is now the greater man. He has lived without one generous purpoſe of life; if he has done good, it was

by chance, while he was purſuing his intereſts, feeding his vanity, or indulging his paſſions. His life has been a ſcene of misrule and diſorder: in principle licentious, in practice infamous, he has ſpread infection around him, and corrupted, or endeavoured to corrupt all that came in his way. After ſuch a life, what a miſerable figure will a noble ſinner make upon his death-bed? how mean and little muſt he appear in his own eyes, how contemptible in the eyes of all about him, and how odious to God and goodneſs! Darkneſs is now his dwelling, and deſpair his proſpect; he turns him round for help, but feels none; his diſtemper is paſt the power of art; he calls for aid in vain from his phyſician, his friends and his family; weak and diſpirited he ſinks within himſelf to find ſome comfort, but ſeeks in vain. His conſcience miſgives him, and his memory is accurſed; the remembrance of his paſt life is tormenting, and the expectation of the future is terrible; he is without peace of conſcience, or hopes of glory

glory; no longer able to live, and yet afraid to die; the pains of his body are the leaſt part of his ſufferings, while his ſoul is on the rack, and agonizing in deſpair.

Or ſhould habitual wickedneſs (which is ſometimes the caſe) reconcile him to the thoughts of dying without hope or fear, yet how ignoble is that ſpirit, how wretched that hope, whoſe beſt proſpect is the gloomy ſpectre of eternal nothing, which can find no refuge but in utter extinction, and whoſe laſt wiſh and ſupreme happineſs it would be to die like a dog!

To conclude; might we not addreſs the men of the world in ſome ſuch words as theſe? "Was life given you for no other "end but to heap up riches, aſpire to ho-"nours, to eat, to drink, to be merry, and "die? What ends of providence or views of "ſupreme wiſdom could be anſwered by "ſuch a wanton ſcheme? Was a reaſonable "ſoul given you the better to purſue the

" intereſts of ſenſe? The faculties of Angels
" to inſtruct you to play the better brutes?
" Was that faithful monitor conſcience, that
" ſenſe of religion, that proſpect of futurity
" implanted in your breaſts in vain? Do you
" feel every faculty at eaſe, and the reaſon-
" able ſoul fully ſatisfied with its preſent
" acquiſitions? Is every bleſſing you enjoy
" ſo durable as to be incapable of change or
" diminution? Is every thing in life ſo a-
" greeable as to admit of no improvement?
" Is the trouble you meet with ſo trifling as
" to want no relief or comfort? Do you find
" yourſelves in all caſes ſufficient to help
" yourſelves? Or will not the hour of pain
" and diſeaſe, of death and darkneſs at laſt
" overtake you? Will any mortal pleaſures
" then affect you? Will your poſſeſſions
" then avail to relieve you? Will your pride
" then profit you? Will your friends ſup-
" port you, or the world ſtand by you?
" Alas! your friends, fortune, family, or
" the world can then give you no relief.
" Death will baniſh all the comforts, and
" level

" level all the diſtinctions of this life; and
" after your eyes are once cloſed, you are
" turned out of all, ſent naked ſpirits into
" the world of ſpirits, where you begin pro-
" perly to live. A day that knows no night,
" now begins to open upon you; and your
" former pleaſures will now but appear like
" a pleaſing dream of a ſhort night that is
" paſt, your ſorrows but like the dew-drops
" of a ſhort morning, vaniſhing at the dawn
" of this eternal day. What habits have
" you contracted proper for this new region?
" What proviſion have you made for your
" reception into theſe new habitations? If
" death finds you unprepared, the reſur-
" rection will give you back accurſed! If
" the day, or life is gone and paſt without
" improvement, in the night of death you
" cannot work! The next life is not a ſtate
" of trial, but of retribution: it is a ſtate
" from which you cannot return, and in
" which you cannot repent: a ſtate, the
" happineſs or miſery of which language

" cannot deſcribe, and whoſe duration num-
" bers cannot reckon!"

DIS-

DISCOURSE IV.

1 JOHN iv. 16.

GOD is LOVE.

MOST of the miſery of human life is owing to our deviating from the truth of God in ſpeculation, and to the tranſgreſſion of his commandments in our practice. But as principle is the common foundation of practice, it will be found that wrong notions are generally the occaſion of a wrong conduct; and that men, eſpecially

thoſe who have been favoured with the light of divine revelation, muſt be fools or groſsly ignorant, before they can be ſinners. All the attributes of God, as diſplayed to us by revelation, are ſuch as tend to promote our holineſs, and thereby to advance our happineſs. But perhaps there is no manifeſtation that God hath made of himſelf, which would conduce more to make us both holy and happy, than this of the Apoſtle in the Text: "God is LOVE."

THAT this heavenly truth may appear more clearly, it may be proper,

1. To explain and confirm it by obſervations drawn from the perfections of God, the appearances in nature, and the proofs and doctrines of revelation.

2. To point out the happy conſequences, which naturally, and I had almoſt ſaid neceſſarily flow from our ſincerely embracing, and hearty concurrence with this divine truth: "God is Love."

To

To diſplay, prove and confirm this truth, let us endeavour,

1. To reflect on the perfections of God abſtractedly, and without calling in either the voice of nature or of revelation for its ſupport.

To a Being like God, uncreated, ſelf-exiſtent, and eternal, we muſt allow all poſſible, all conceivable perfection. Now of all attributes and perfections, according to our conceptions of things, goodneſs or love muſt be maintained to hold the firſt place, and to challenge our higheſt eſteem, veneration and affection. Mere wiſdom may qualify the ſtateſman to project, and mere power may enable the tyrant to execute the moſt extenſive miſchief, but it is goodneſs, diffuſive goodneſs that renders the miniſter a public bleſſing, and a prince the father of his people. We may reverence, we may admire, or perhaps reſpect ſuperior wiſdom, as we muſt tremble under the terror and apprehenſions

ſions of abſolute and irreſiſtible power; but goodneſs excells theſe as much as vernal breezes, or blooming and fruitful ſeaſons excell the horrors of winter, and the rage of the elements. So much do the effects of divine love exceed in our eſtimation, and in all rational computation the plans of the moſt exact order and exquiſite wiſdom not productive of good, and not conducive to happineſs! While the other attributes rather awe than delight, and ſtrike us with terror and amazement, more than love and complacency, goodneſs charms every heart and raviſhes all affections: raiſe your ideas of perfection as high as you can, diveſted of goodneſs, it can be no more than lifeleſs beauty, and unaffecting ſplendor: goodneſs therefore admitted for a perfection, muſt certainly belong to the moſt perfect Being.

AGAIN, let God be conſidered, as he muſt be, as an all-perfect, ſelf-exiſtent, and all-ſufficient Being, and as ſuch he cannot be ſuppoſed to want the creation of Angels

or

or men, or any creation at all, to ſupply his defects, perfect his nature, or compleat his happineſs: he muſt foreſee the effects of his power and wiſdom in their future poſſibility as in their actual exiſtence; and the divine ideas muſt be accompliſhed by a foreſight of what he could, as by the knowledge of what he ſhould actually produce; but a foreſight of the communication of good, would not be good in the divine idea without the actual communication: or to ſpeak more plainly; God could not have the ſame complacency in the proſpect of future poſſible good, as in the actual exiſtence and communication of that good. Poſſible, or mere ideal good is no good at all; it muſt be good actually communicated that gives us the conception of a Being ſupremely perfect and good: nor can we conceive perfection moral or divine of a higher nature, than that which conſiſts in the communication of good: and the more valuable ſuch good, and the more diffuſive ſuch communication, the more highly we muſt conceive of the perfection of the com-

communicator. A God awfully retired in eternal ſolitude, and feeding on the contemplation of his attributes, without the exerciſe or exertion of them, ſhould ſeem to ſpeak an imperfect, an impotent or envious being; whoſe no goodneſs would entitle him to no adoration, eſteem or affection. All his perfections thus centered in himſelf, give us the idea of infinite light confined to its orb, and infinite fulneſs reſtrained to a vacuum. How much more agreeable to our idea of perfection is the God coming forth as it were out of himſelf, inceſſantly ſtreaming rays of beneficence, eternally imparting from his infinite and inexhauſtible eſſence, the works of creation and providence, and filling all things living with plenteouſneſs! We can conceive no adequate cauſe of creation but the divine goodneſs: this productive of, perpetually producing, ſupporting, and accommodating with a ſuitable good, every poſſible degree and kind of exiſtence, and from his unſparing hand ſhowring down bleſſings upon an univerſe of being,

being, may ſeem (if any thing can be ſaid to do ſo) to ſatisfy the deſires, and compleat the happineſs of God himſelf. The ſun, as it is a ſtriking inſtance and inſtrument of, ſo it may bear ſome reſemblance to the divine goodneſs: it labours unwearied, it ſpends itſelf unimpaired, and unexhauſted in diffuſing light and heat to ſurrounding globes: deprive it of its uſe, you deface its beauty; extinguiſh its ſplendor, and you deſtroy its glory: deſpoil it of its influence and happy effects, and you cancel its very nature and eſſence, and leave us in its room a cold and lifeleſs, a dark and unactive maſs, a horrid and frightful portent, uſeleſs, if not fatal to the ſyſtem of creation.

We can conceive no profit ariſing to God from the ſervices of his creatures, men or angels; yet goodneſs may be the eſſential attribute, or as I may call it, the ruling paſſion of the all-perfect Being; and good neceſſarily communicated, and reflected back upon its Author, may be, as eſſential to his nature,

nature, ſo expreſſive of his glory, and perfective of his happineſs. We cannot poſſibly aſcribe to God either happineſs or glory, ſhould we conſider him as an inactive, uncommunicative, an indolent or envious Being; ſhut up within himſelf, employed in the contemplation of his own perfections, and beaming neither light nor comfort beyond the ſphere of his own limited and partial Self-exiſtence and Self-enjoyment.

How can we reconcile the conduct of the retired, the ſolitary and gloomy tyrant to the character of the infinite and all-perfect God? And though it muſt be allowed, that an uncreated, a ſelf-exiſtent and eternal Being, ſuch as God muſt be on the ſuppoſition of a God, muſt be all-perfect, all-ſufficient, and in and of himſelf completely happy, and independent of all foreign aid or acceſſion; yet goodneſs may be the very eſſence of his nature, perfection and happineſs; and a communication of good the neceſſary efflux of the Divinity, expreſſive

of

of his exuberance and infinite fulneſs, and characteriſtic of his perfections: and it is in fact as impoſſible to conceive of the pure Deity, abſtracted from all expreſſion and exertion of its properties and powers, as it is to conceive of a pure creation, independent and abſtracted of the idea of a Creator.

But the actual exiſtence of creation ſtill more clearly and fully proves the beneficence of God: for ſuppoſe him, as he muſt be ſuppoſed, infinite, all-perfect, and in and of himſelf complete and happy; what, ſhall we ſay, could move him to the work of creation, but the excellencies and perfections of his nature? Malice, according to our ideas, argues imperfection: and the diſplay of mere wiſdom and power in order to ſtrike terror, to exact obedience, or to raiſe admiration in the inferiour orders, would be ſuch a diſplay of cruelty, or vanity and folly, as would diſcredit and diſgrace the character of a good man. The moſt refined plan of political wiſdom, that ſerves only to exhibit the

the genius of the ſtateſman, but not to add to the happineſs of the community, muſt be judged in the eye of reaſon no other than a more refined ſpecies of folly: as an exertion of the moſt heroic virtues, in gaining battles and reducing kingdoms, which ſerved only to ſpread the name and terror of the conqueror, muſt be deemed by the ſober reaſoner no better than a more ſplendid ſpecies of oppreſſion and vain glory. And ſhall we charge the vices and imperfections of men on the all-perfect God? Goodneſs alone is that attribute, which endears its divine Author both to our reaſon and affections, and renders Him the higheſt object of our eſteem, our adoration and love.

2. FROM the exiſtence of a creation, let us look into the contents of it, and ſee whether theſe do not with one voice ſpeak the language of the apoſtle, that "God is love."

EXAMINE the material ſyſtem extending throughout heaven and earth, and you find yourſelf

yourſelf preſented with a variegated ſcene, rich in uſe and beauty; you will find the meaneſt and minuteſt objects not without their uſe and ſignificance; the moſt diſtaſteful not without their ſweetneſs; the moſt jarring and diſcordant not without their order and harmony, and the moſt dark and ſhaded not without propriety in giving luſtre to others, nor the moſt crooked and deformed without their fitneſs to recommend the ſhapely and the beautiful. The learning, the philoſophy of ages has been employed in exploring the works of nature; which the more they are examined, conſpire ſtill the more to manifeſt the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Creator: the uſes and ends, the objects and organs in the natural and moral world; and both the littleneſs and greatneſs of the phenomena (the hand of an Almighty Maſter being expreſſed in the formation of an atom, as in the frame of a ſyſtem, or of an univerſe of ſyſtems) all theſe give ſuch clear, ſuch ſtrong and ſtriking proofs of a beneficent Creator, as none but

the moſt blind and obſtinate can overlook and reſiſt. There is not uſe alone interwoven, but a ſtriking and inimitable beauty painted on the face, and in the whole arrangement of nature. We are ſtruck with pleaſing aſtoniſhment at the greatneſs and magnificence; we are entertained with the variety and novelty; we are charmed with the bloom and ſplendor, the exact and fine proportions, the extenſive and happy proſpects, the divine ſpirit and ineffable air of nature in all her works. A voluntary complacency, an inſtinctive dilation or gayety of heart, a fond admiration riſing to enthuſiaſm, an elevation of ſoul mixed with rapture and devotion is apt to ſeize, to poſſeſs and tranſport us upon a ſurvey of the lovely landſcapes, and a pure reliſh of the genuine bleſſings, with which God has overſpread, enriched and beautified our preſent world.

THE univerſe ſeen by a devout or intellectual eye from the region of pure ſpirit, may appear an immenſe ſphere depending by

by a chain of gold from the throne of God, inſcribed on every ſide with divine characters, moving in divine order and harmony, and reſplendent with divine light and beauty.

DAVID ſeems frequently to have caught or improved the flame of devotion by a ſurvey of the various works of nature; their grandeur, their magnificence and beauty, no leſs than their variety, often tranſport him into warm and happy meditations, and a fervour that breaks out into raptures of gratitude and ſongs of praiſe. He ſeems to be carried out of himſelf, while he is celebrating the greatneſs and goodneſs, the majeſty and mercy of God in the works of creation. The hundred and fourth pſalm is among others a remarkable inſtance both of the taſte, the genius, and the devotion of its author; he here runs over the great maſter-keys, as I may call them, of this harmonious ſyſtem, the world; and joins his voice with the whole chorus of nature,

to celebrate the praiſes of its Author. We ſee him on this occaſion detached from the grandeur of royalty, and like one who was a ſtranger to the pomp and pleaſures of a court, the mere man or the enraptured ſaint, the commoner of nature or her enthuſiaſtic admirer, attentive to and converſant among fields, mountains and woods, and raviſhed with the happy proſpect around him. He ſees nothing but God expreſſed in all his works. "O my God, thou art "become exceeding glorious; thou art "cloathed with majeſty and honour: thou "deckeſt thyſelf with light, as it were with "a garment, and ſpreadeſt out the heavens "like a curtain; who laid the beams of his "chambers in the waters, and maketh the "clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the "wings of the wind." From a ſurvey of the heavens he deſcends to the lower regions of the earth, and celebrates its various productions, and the uſes they ſerve to the ſupport of man and beaſt. The foundation of the ſtedfaſt earth, the expanſion and courſe of the

the fluid waters: their deſcent from the hills, their wandering through the vallies, their emptying themſelves into the ocean; the trees planted by the waters, and the birds ſinging among the branches; the graſs for the cattle, the green herb, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make him a chearful countenance, and bread to ſtrengthen man's heart; the fruitful trees, the growth of the foreſt, the cedars of Libanus, and the fir-trees the dwelling of the Stork; the high hills and rocky mountains, the courſe and revolutions of the ſun and moon, the ſucceſſion of day and night, with their uſes to man and beaſt, are recited as demonſtrations of the divine goodneſs by the Pſalmiſt, not as a cold philoſophic enquirer, but as a charmed ſpectator, a delighted hearer, and raptured devotee. In all, through all, and above all, the Creator, the Supporter, the Father of nature and all her children is ſeen, is acknowledged, is adored and celebrated. And the Pſalmiſt expreſſes his gratitude, his joy, and a kind of heavenly tranſport, in ſeeing

himſelf thus ſurrounded with the works of God, and with ſuch ſhining inſtances of his power, his preſence and providence.

AMONG theſe inſtances he particularly mentions the numbers of the creatures, as the objects of the divine power and providence. This indeed is a ſignal proof of the goodneſs and love of God; and this proof is ſtill the more pregnant and ſatisfactory to us, as the philoſophy of latter times has diſcovered by the help of glaſſes innumerable ſpecies and tribes of animals, peopling every element and region of heaven and earth; kingdoms and nations, we may ſay worlds of creatures extending to infinity, and imperceptible to ſenſe and the naked eye. Shall we ſay, that theſe minims of nature are neceſſary to the exiſtence and happineſs of the all-perfect Being? They are certainly expreſſive of that exuberant goodneſs, the overflowings of an infinite fullneſs, forming itſelf into every poſſibility and mode of exiſtence; as it is the neceſſa-

neceſſary nature of goodneſs to ſpread and extend itſelf, to demand the largeſt field, and the moſt ample theatre for its diſplay; and as it would ſuffer in its eſſence by contraction, be diminiſhed in its honour by limitation, and be impoveriſhed by a ſparing and limited meaſure of communication. Infinite wiſdom had appeared, not in the extenſiveneſs of the ſyſtem, but in the niceſt propriety of means and ends in carrying it on; as infinite power might have been diſplayed by the magnificence of the works produced by it, and by the perpetuity of its productions; but ſupreme goodneſs ſhould ſeem to require an infinite variety and endleſs ſucceſſion; and the creatures to ſhare in its bleſſings, and be happy in its communications.

INFINITE wiſdom and power had been, as they are manifeſted in the conſtitution of the material ſyſtem, or in the formation of one ſpecies of animals, or in the frame of one individual of a ſpecies, as much as

in the production of ſuch ſpecies, or ſuch individual ten thouſand times repeated; but goodneſs had been contracted, and the character of the all-perfect God diſcredited by the denial, the diminution or ſubtraction of one good poſſible to be communicated. Hence, and hence only we can ſufficiently account for thoſe myriads of kindreds and nations of animals which inhabit every element of nature. They are indeed ſubſervient to other purpoſes, beſides that of their own pleaſure or advantage; as they ſerve by their meanneſs and ſeeming inſignificancy to make higher orders ſenſible of their ſuperior advantages; yet ſtill they poſſeſs their peculiar organs, paſſions or ſenſations, and objects ſuited to their taſte and gratification; a ſphere and ſituation ſuited to their make, and an element adapted to their nature; and if their enjoyments are limited, ſo are their faculties; if they have no honours or riches, neither are they curſed with avarice or ambition; if their term of life is ſhort, they are probably denied the know-

knowledge of duration and proſpect of futurity. Their ſenſations may be the more, and more exquiſite, as they compoſe the whole of their nature, buſineſs and enjoyment, are not corrected by reaſon, or damped and alloyed by cares and anxiety, by the conſciouſneſs of tranſgreſſion, or the fear of puniſhment. From what we obſerve in the other parts of nature, the fitneſs of means and ends, of objects and organs, we may preſume by analogy that the animal race have their proper ſphere, their labour ſuited to their day, and their enjoyments to their capacities; and inſignificant as they may ſeem, the infinite wiſdom, power and providence of the Creator in their accurate organization, and the perfect conſtruction of their bodies, in the endleſs number and ſucceſſion of their ſeveral ſpecies, and in the proviſion made for their ſupport, are as evident as in the conſtruction and government of a world, or a ſyſtem of worlds. How condeſcending, how diffuſive, how infinite is Divine Love thus extending to every

every poſſibility of exiſtence, and every capacity of good? Do you require that nothing ſhould have place in the creation of God, but what is of the higheſt order of perfection, and cloathed with the fulleſt and brighteſt blaze of glory? You would be inſenſible of this glory and perfection, without ſhade to illuſtrate the one, and meanneſs to give dignity and elevation to the other. Beſides that, in the ſyſtem and univerſe of an infinite and all-perfect Being, we cannot poſſibly define or conceive what is the higheſt order of perfection: and conceive of the Divine Perfection as high as you can in its effects, the ſubject of our preſent diſcourſe, theſe muſt ſtill appear and be objected to as mean, while they have nothing inferior below them.

SUPREME goodneſs, infinite perfection and fulneſs ſhould ſeem to imply and comprehend all poſſible good; and to detract from or deſtroy any good that does or can exiſt in the univerſe, would be ſo far to deſtroy

ſtroy or diminiſh the goodneſs and perfection of the Creator: Nor can we conceive of a ſtage too large for the diſplay of an infinite Being; of objects too numerous for his inſpection, or too mean for his attention and regard.

In proportion as the kingdoms and empires of this world are contracted, the grandeur of the prince is ſuppoſed to be diminiſhed, and his glory leſſened or ſhaded. But who ſhall preſume to limit the kingdom of God, or to ſay to the arm of the Almighty; "hitherto ſhalt thou go and no far-"ther?" Who can confine the influence of an infinite orb of light, or contract the agency of its rays to a ſphere of any given dimenſions? What can be conſidered as high or low, near or more remote from an infinite and univerſal preſence; to whoſe eye the minuteſt animal in the bowels of the earth or the depth of the ſea, is as naked and open as the higheſt orders of cherubim and ſeraphim; and in whoſe ſight the hero

and

and the conqueror is not more ſignificant or important than the ſparrow that ſitteth on the houſe-top?

It is from a practical ſenſe of this infinite power and univerſal preſence, that the pſalmiſt riſes in his devotion, and is tranſported into warmer and happier raptures in his ſurvey of the works of God; he calls upon not only the more diſtinguiſhed parts of the creation, and the utmoſt efforts as they might ſeem of the Divine Power; "Praiſe him all ye angels of his; praiſe him "all his hoſt; praiſe him, ſun and moon, "praiſe him all ye ſtars and light, praiſe him "all ye heavens, and ye waters that are above "the heavens." But he invokes even the mute creation, and the loweſt orders of the creatures, to join with him in celebrating the praiſes of their Maker. "Praiſe the "Lord upon earth, ye dragons, and all "deeps; fire and hail, ſnow and vapours, "winds and ſtorms fulfilling his word; "mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and

"all

"all cedars, beaſts and all cattle, worms "and feathered fowls:" not only "the "kings of the earth, princes and all judg- "es of the world, but all people, young "men and maidens, old men and children" are invited to join in this ſacrifice of thankſ- giving to their God, "who is good to all, "and whoſe mercy is over all his works: "and though the Lord is high above all "heathen, and his glory above the heavens, "yet humbleth he himſelf to behold the "things that are in heaven and earth: he "taketh up the ſimple out of the duſt, and "liſteth the poor out of the mire, that he "may ſet him with the princes, even with "the princes of his people."

MAY we then, in compliance with the invitation of the Pſalmiſt, and from the ſame devout ſenſe of this univerſal Power and Providence, join with the whole chorus of creation, and with every thing that hath breath, to "praiſe the Lord."

DIS-

DISCOURSE V.

1 JOHN iv. 16.

GOD is LOVE.

IN a former Diſcourſe I propoſed to explain and confirm this happy truth by obſervations drawn from the perfections of God, the appearances in nature, and the proofs and doctrines of revelation.

2dly; To point out the happy conſequences which naturally, and I had almoſt ſaid

ſaid neceſſarily flow from our ſincerely embracing, and heartily concurring with this divine truth; "GOD is LOVE."

ON the firſt of theſe heads I have already ſhewn how the goodneſs and love of God are manifeſted in the appearances of nature, reſpecting the animal creation and the brutal world. In our ſurvey of man and his ſituation, and the riſing bleſſings to which he is formed by nature and adopted by grace, we ſhall ſtill find more abundant reaſon to conclude with the apoſtle, that "GOD is LOVE."

MAN, when he conſiders his ſituation and circumſtances, the frame of his body, and the endowments of his mind, and compares them with the ſituation and faculties of the inferior orders of animals, cannot but be ſenſible of the ſuperior bleſſings he enjoys, and the higher place he holds in the creation of God. He ſees the fair field of nature ſpread out for his walk and contemplation,

temptation, for his uſe and enjoyment. He ſees every element miniſter to his wants, or to his pleaſures: he ſees days and nights, times and ſeaſons revolve in ſuch an order and ſucceſſion as beſt ſuit his occaſions, and declare both the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Creator and Governor of the world. Who with his ſenſes perfect and unimpaired (and how few are born without them) can behold the order, the proportion and ſymmetry, the colouring, the light and ſhades, the heights and depths, the variety and harmony of this beauteous landſcape of heaven and earth, without admiration, complacency and ſecret tranſport? But when he further obſerves this magnificent ſcene, ſubſervient not only to his pleaſure, but to his uſe, and adminiſtring to his ſupport and comfort as well as to his delight; when he finds his ſenſes refreſhed by its colour and fragrance, his life ſupported, and his wants ſupplied by its various productions, the winds blow, the ſhowers deſcend, the ſeaſons revolve, and the different elements uni-

ting in their operations to promote his advantage and happineſs, his admiration riſes to devotion, and his complacency ſwells into pious gratitude and ſongs of praiſe.

MAN, has further, a world within himſelf in his own frame and moral conſtitution. Beſides the innocent paſſions of his nature, which he may honeſtly gratify, he has a ſet of more noble and enlarged affections, the indulgence of which will be attended with ever growing pleaſure: a friend is another ſelf, who alleviates your cares, and doubles your joys by ſharing in them. Benevolence partakes in the happineſs of all around it; and in proportion as you contribute to the bleſſing of others, you are yourſelf bleſſed. Beſides your perſonal enjoyments, your perſonal virtues will afford a large fund of entertainment, and like a living fountain within you, will flow and refreſh you with ever new delight. By temperance and ſelf-command, you promote the health of your body, and the freedom and purity of your

ſpirit;

ſpirit; and the whole man is preſerved entire and vacant to the contemplation and purer reliſhes of God and nature. Integrity and innocence of heart and life, which nothing can aſſail, or muſt aſſail in vain, and which the power and violence of men or devils cannot violate without your own concurrence, is another ſource of the pureſt good, and as ſuch, a new inſtance of the love of God to you. Amidſt the calamities and tempeſts of life a good conſcience is as a port and ſanctuary, to which you may always retreat for ſecurity and peace. Conſcious of the honeſt diſcharge of your duty to man, and of ſincere, though imperfect obedience to God, you have nothing to fear from injured enemies, or offended heaven.

VIOLENCE may hurt the body; accidents, as they are called, may impair your fortune, and calumnies injure your good name; but if conſcience ſpeak peace within, you have a ſupport equal to all your wants, an opi-

ate which will aſſuage or alleviate all your diſorders and pains, and a voice of comfort that ſpeaks better things, and conveys more ſolid ſatisfaction, than the united applauſe of mankind can beſtow.

CONSCIENCE particularly reſpects the approbation of God, and obedience and reſignation to his will; and in doing, or ſuffering, while we are united to him, truſt in him, and repoſe on his providence, we ſhall find ourſelves ſupported by a ſtrength, directed by a light, and inſpired with hopes and comforts more than mortal. The truly reſigned and devoted to God behold him, and behold him as a GOD of LOVE in all his works and diſpenſations. They will as he wills, and by a chearful conformity to what he ordains or permits they enjoy all events, all times and ſeaſons as the ordinance of God.

A CANDID, a fair and friendly ſurvey of nature without and within us, will diſpoſe us

us to this happy temper and divine ſpirit, and lead us, as it led ſome of the ancients, particularly the Platoniſts, to conſider God as the GOD of LOVE. The beſt philoſophy, agreeably to the trueſt theology, aſſigned the principle of love, as the motive to the creation of the univerſe. Plato expreſſly ſtiles GOD LOVE, as well as the apoſtle: and we may obſerve in general that the ancient heathen world, notwithſtanding its ignorance and folly in the knowledge and practice of religion, ſeems to have held this as a common notion, that divinity or godhead implied the communication of good: and hence, or in other words, it was the communication of good that entitled the communicator to the honour of deification. Thus the ſun, the moon and ſtars, the earth, the fire and water, the inventors of arts and agriculture, and the ſubduers of monſters were adopted into the number of the heathen gods, as benefactors to mankind; and the principal object of their adoration, Jupiter himſelf, was ſtiled a father, as well

as a king, the beſt as well as the greateſt of beings. Thus nature itſelf, uninſtructed nature ſhould ſeem to ſay, that "God is good," and that "his mercy is over all his works."

But in anſwer to all that has been obſerved and alledged on this ſubject, taken from our abſtracted notions of God, from his creation of the univerſe, from the beauty and order, the benefits and bleſſings ſpread out upon the face of the creation for the uſe, the entertainment, the profit and pleaſure of its ſeveral inhabitants: notwithſtanding all this, it may and will be objected, that the world in fact is not ſuch a ſeat of bliſs, ſuch a paradiſe of delight, as we have deſcribed it; that clouds and tempeſts frequently ſhade and diſorder the viſionary proſpect we have held out, corrupt the bleſſings and deface the beauty of creation; that paſſions make the ſame ravage and devaſtation in the moral, as tempeſts do in the natural world; that our beſt natural feelings, our public and benevolent affections, and even conſcience itſelf are frequently ſtifled and violated by ſelfiſhneſs,

ſelfiſhneſs, by ſottiſhneſs and enormous guilt; and that pain and miſery make a more conſpicuous figure in the world, and are more frequently the portion of mankind, than the happineſs and pleaſure which we have aſſigned them. In anſwer to which objection let it be obſerved, that the evils both natural and moral complained of, are not only conſiſtent with, but expreſſive of the goodneſs and love of God.

1. NATURAL evils as they are called, ſuch as ſtorms, and clouds and tempeſts have been ſhewn by the natural philoſopher, in various inſtances, and on many accounts, to be both neceſſary, uſeful and ſalutary to the ſyſtem to which they belong, and to its inhabitants. Beſides, there is a moral end in thoſe interruptions, horrid as they may ſeem, of the courſe of nature: this laſt would otherwiſe appear a chain of fate, or an invariable link or ſucceſſion of neceſſary cauſes and effects; and we ſhould be leſs ſenſible of the benefits of nature, and the bleſſings of hea-

ven, without being thus occaſionally deprived of them. By penurious harveſts; by draught or famine we learn with gratitude, with prayer and dependence to look up to him, who openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteouſneſs: as by experiencing the thunder of his power we are taught the more to reliſh and enjoy his ſtill ſmall voice in the refreſhing breeze and the fruitful ſhower.

2. VICE, miſery, and ſeeming irregularity may have place in the moral world without detracting from the goodneſs of God. Paſſions here have their uſe, as well as tempeſts in the natural world, to rouze men from ſloth and indolence, and put them upon a courſe of action uſeful to themſelves, and beneficial to the public. They are inſtruments frequently made uſe of by the great Governor of nature to puſh on important diſcoveries, to aſſert the common liberties of mankind, to reſiſt the lawleſs, and to abaſe the tyrant and oppreſſor. In a ſtate of

of probation, as the preſent muſt be allowed, they are further neceſſary to give occaſion for the exerciſe of the moſt heroic virtues, in reſiſting their impulſe, reſtraining their violence, and directing them to the proper channel in which they were ordained to flow.

If miſery is the general attendant on vice and immorality, what but the goodneſs of God could eſtabliſh ſuch an order? As the practice of virtue and true religion are by the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature, the ſource and parent of the trueſt happineſs, could God take a more effectual and gracious method to make man happy, than by the miſery and pain which he has annexed to the tranſgreſſion of their duty? If you ſee the world expoſed to ſorrow and calamity, do you not ſee the ſame world lying in wickedneſs? The pains and diſeaſes which you obſerve the ſinner ſuffer, are generally the inflictions of a friend, the remedies applied by the great phyſician to reſtore us

to

to peace and perfect ſoundneſs of both body and ſoul. Thus what appears to vulgar obſervers as examples of judgment, are frequently no more than ſo many inſtances of mercy; and the ſorrows of a night are productive of new-born joys in the morning. Thus, when we ſee the ſinner labouring under diſeaſe or ſickneſs for days and months and years, we may conſider him as under a courſe of wholeſome diſcipline, preſented by the ſovereign Phyſician to purge him from his ſins and his miſery, and to recover him to health, to virtue, to happineſs and glory.

EXTEND this obſervation from a particular inſtance to the common and general ſubjects of miſery, that every where meet your eyes in the walks of human life, and you may regard them all as in the ſame ſituation, and under the ſame diſcipline, ſick only in order to the recovery of better health, and caſt down only to riſe again in renewed vigour and integrity. The world beheld

beheld in this light is no longer a ſcene of ſorrow, and a vale of tears, but as a vine-yard broken up, cultivated and pruned in order to produce fairer and more abundant fruit under the kindly influence of the beams and ſhowers of heaven.

MAN, ſinful duſt and aſhes as he is, affords an ample field for the exerciſe of the Divine Goodneſs. To humble the proud, to check the preſumptuous, to reduce the extravagant, to reſtrain the licentious, to ſend the rich empty away, and to ſpread languor and ſickneſs among the drunken and debauched, are not more judicial acts, than they are friendly offices to the ſeveral ſufferers, to ſober and reduce them to the proper meaſure of health, of truth and nature. Were children permitted to live at large, and without controul or authority, to indulge to every appetite, and to gratify every humour at the expence of their health, of truth, honour and humanity: ſhould we in this caſe call the parents kind or cruel? Or would not proper reſtraint and correction applied to the delinquents,

quents, be the beſt proof of parental affection and kindneſs?

But ſuffering, it may be ſaid, is not peculiarly appropriated and confined to ſinners, ſince the beſt of men are often diſtinguiſhed by ſuperior calamities, and a heavier weight of woes, than are the ordinary lot of men.

In this caſe, without giving, as might be done, ſeveral other reaſons for this exception to the common proceſs of Providence, in aſſigning happineſs to virtue, and annexing miſery to vice, it may be confidently, becauſe truly aſſerted, that the Divine Goodneſs is not leſs conſpicuous, or real, in advancing and refining virtue, than in correcting and reforming vice. God is, we ſay, the ſovereign good in nature, and muſt according to their different apprehenſions and capacities of him, be the ſovereign good of all his creatures. The truly good, the ſincerely pious and virtuous, love God and

and goodneſs, righteouſneſs and truth, not for the ſake of the preſent profit, or momentary pleaſure they bring, but for their intrinſic excellency, eternal fitneſs, value and authority, and build their whole character and happineſs in conforming to the will of God, and in following wherever he leads, or points the way: God is all they know, or deſire to know: God is to them more than health or fortune, than pomp or pleaſure, than title or empire. Conſcience reſpecting God and his laws, his preſence and providence, reſts ſatisfied with the diſcharge of duty, and looks no farther for contentment, peace and happineſs. Thus the good man's ſupreme good is unalienable, and independent of outward circumſtances and bleſſings of life: nay a deſtruction or diminution of theſe contributes to unfetter the good man's ſoul from earthly objects and purſuits, and to raiſe it ſtill nearer to its beſt and ſovereign good. Thus the great and gracious Father of the univerſe trains up his deareſt children by a ſeverer courſe

courſe of diſcipline to nobler attainments and higher perfection, than are the lot of ordinary mortals.

I WILL not, I dare not ſay, that this perfection and theſe attainments, the effect of ſuffering and calamity, are actual and preſent happineſs, and as ſuch to be aſcribed to the Divine Goodneſs; though the ſufferers themſelves, who held faſt their integrity and virtue under every trial and diſtreſs, may ſeem to have thought ſo, and were the laſt to complain. Yet this we may conceive and rationally advance and maintain, that the all-perfect and all-righteous God, who has in the general courſe of nature connected virtue and happineſs, would not or could not make an exception to this general rule, to the diſadvantage and deſtruction of the moſt virtuous. The ſufferings then of theſe, by which we ſee them tried, refined, perfected, and coming forth like the gold more pure and illuſtrious from the furnace, we may

may conſider as incentives to virtue and to glory. Man is in a probationary and progreſſive ſtate, and not meeting here with the reward of his labours, may rationally collect, that they are reſerved to an hereafter. To one who conceives aright of the moral attributes of the infinite and eternal Being, life will appear but a momentary ſtage, or theatre ſerving to a momentary exhibition, and then giving place to auguſter and more permanent ſcenes, the reception of thoſe who have manfully played the part, and ſupported the character aſſigned them by the great Author of the drama of human nature; and the more arduous this part, and the more diſtinguiſhed this character has been, the more affectionate muſt be the approbation, the more ample the reward, and the more glorious the crown aſſigned them by their Spectator and Judge. Thus in ſubjecting men to ſuffering, God may be ſaid in the language of ſacred writ, only to call his ſons, his favourite ſons to glory.

He

He tries that he may approve; he depreſſes that he may exalt; he debaſes that he may glorify them. They live, they act, they fight, they bleed, perhaps they die in order to be raiſed, to be diſtinguiſhed, to be crowned with ſuperior honour and glory, with immortality and eternal life.

THE patriot and philoſopher of the pagan world ſeem to have breathed this etherial ſpirit, this pant after immortality; and by their conduct as well as ſentiments to have expreſſed their confidence in the gracious providence of heaven. Thus the miſery and ſufferings of mankind are but the efforts and effects of divine goodneſs, to call and revive virtue where it is extinguiſhed, to advance, to improve and refine it where it is a living principle, and by theſe means to enlarge and magnify itſelf, by enlarging the ſphere, and multiplying the ſubjects of happineſs.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VI.

1 JOHN iv. 16.

GOD is LOVE.

IN an infinite Being there is endleſs perfection, and we can never ſay of his attributes and adminiſtrations, hitherto ſhalt thou go and no farther. We may obſerve at every glance, and in every object of creation, proofs of the wiſdom, the power and goodneſs of God; but the utmoſt energy and ef-

fects of thoſe attributes, and to how many ſubjects they extend, is no doubt beyond the comprehenſion of men or angels.

THE kingdom of God conſidered not like the goſpel as one diſpenſation, and vouchſafed to one order of beings, but containing the empire of the univerſe, is poſſibly infinite; or next to infinite, and in ſome ſort expreſſive of the nature and character of its Author and King; yet the diſplays of it are partial and confined, ſuited to the capacities of its ſeveral ſubjects, and ſtill opening and enlarging in proportion to the improvements they make of every preſent diſpenſation; and though the kingdom of God, is like his attributes, ever full and perfect, yet with reſpect to us, it muſt be partial and progreſſive; and probably, we may ſay certainly, adapted to the natural and moral capacities of the creatures. Of this we have a proof in the preſent ſubject; we have ſeen the goodneſs of God in the conſtruction of nature, reſpecting man and the other inhabitants of the globe; but ſhould we ſtop here,

and

and confine the divine agency and benignity to a mere ſyſtem of nature and its preſent appearances and effects, we ſhackle the Almighty and confine the infinite Being in a manner that contradicts our cleareſt ideas of an infinite and all-perfect Being. God's kingdom is perfect in every ſpring and wheel, as in the whole machine; in the origin as in the progreſs and conſummation, if it ever will be conſummated, or proceed to ſuch a period, as admits of no enlargement. The ſtate of nature, which we laſt conſidered may be looked on as the origin of God's kingdom, and as ſuch perfect and proper in its kind, though not incapable of progreſſion. We have ſhewn it to be a ſcene, wherein God's goodneſs is diſplayed, and yet we can eaſily conceive a more enlarged diſplay of divine goodneſs to the rational creation. We acknowledge the purity and fountain of light in its firſt dawn, though we behold more of its heat and ſplendor in the noon-tide flood of day. Advanced as chriſtians are in the knowledge and progreſſion of God's kingdom, we behold an ampler manifeſta-

tion of love, than was vouchſafed to the preceding ages of the world, and find the ſtate of nature and its bleſſings greatly defective, when compared to the advantages conveyed to us by the goſpel of grace; and it is in reſpect to theſe, that the apoſtle in the text ſtiles God, the GOD of LOVE, or love itſelf: GOD is LOVE.

3. And here let us conſider on what account, and for what reaſons, the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt emphatically and peculiarly challenges this title.

In nature it muſt be acknowledged there was held out a light, but a dubious and feeble light for the information of mankind in truth and true religion, and for the ſupport of ſincere and ſuffering virtue.

If ſome few refined ſpirits ſaw God in his unity and attributes, yet the general body of mankind were notoriouſly ignorant both in the principles and practice of religious

gious truth; they had Gods many, and Lords many: and the fountain of their being, the ſupport of their exiſtence, the foundation of their trueſt comfort, their great Father, and the Father of the univerſe was almoſt, I ſhould rather ſay, was altogether unknown among them. Not influenced, and unſupported by proper principles, the worſt of men were lawleſs and licentious, while the beſt might be tempted to deſpair. Human nature labouring under diſtreſs applied to devotion, but addreſſed it to God, or rather to imaginary gods in falſe and fictitious rites, and in ceremonies ſuperſtitious, abſurd and impious. A fear of offended heaven, and a conſcience of contracted guilt made the offenders ſeek a reconciliation and atonement ſometimes by large and pompous gifts or offerings, and ſometimes by the blood of bulls and goats, and by ſacrifices unnatural and cruel. If the true object of devotion was miſtaken, the great end of human life ſeems to have been as little underſtood. Preſent cares, preſent

objects, and the gratification of the preſent paſſion increaſed the darkneſs, or contributed to extinguiſh the light of nature in regard to a future ſtate, and the immortality of the ſoul; and if the proſpect of a future ſtate, was as it was indeed admitted, the vulgar faith on this ſubject was too groſs, too viſionary and romantic to gain a rational aſſent, or to enforce a juſt moral practice; as the arguments and opinions of the philoſopher on this ſubject were too refined and abſtracted to reach and affect the vulgar underſtanding, if indeed they convinced his own. The philoſophers themſelves ſeem to have been diſtreſſed on this ſubject, and to have acted more firmly and rationally, on the ſuppoſition founded on the authority of tradition, than on the demonſtration of the truth of the ſoul's immortality; which the beſt and wiſeſt of them, as conſcious of their ignorance and uncertainty, hoped rather than affirmed, or deduced from ſuch remote principles, as could give little or no conviction. But theſe diſadvantages, great as they

they were, appeared not ſuch to them, whom they ſeemed chiefly to affect, as they ſaw themſelves not in an unequal compariſon with nations more poliſhed and enlightened. Nay both Greeks and Romans looked on themſelves and their ſituation in a favourable and advantageous light, compared with the ignorance of barbarous nations, and the ruder ages of antiquity.

But as chriſtians, when we review the hiſtory and manners of the pagan world, we find indeed the ſame God of nature, the ſame elements, and ſeaſons and paſſions, the ſame heaven and earth; but we find a wonderful change for the better, and to our advantage in the moral and religious world.

The gracious God has by a divine revelation poured in new light upon the human mind, given new ſtrength and ſupport to virtue, more clear and perfect rules of duty, a fuller aſſurance of the divine government and providence, and a clearer proſpect of the fu-

ture ſtate. Such is the love of God manifeſted to mankind in and by Jeſus Chriſt; that though conſcious of guilt, while we have ability to repent, we have no room to deſpair: born as we are in ignorance, and beſet with infirmities, we have the LOVE of GOD to direct us, and the ſpirit of God to aſſiſt us in the diſcharge of our duty; a return is promiſed to our prayers, and pardon aſſured to our penitence. God, to thoſe who are in Chriſt Jeſus, is no longer a ſevere inquiſitor, or an angry judge, but a merciful Father, proclaiming pardon and peace. His providence attends us in every ſtep. His attributes are ſo many pledges given, or aſſurances made to our faith, of aſſiſtance in what we have to do, of ſupport in what we have to ſuffer, of ſtrength in our weakneſs, of direction in our doubts, and of light and comfort in darkneſs and the hour of death. Amidſt the accidents, uncertainties and calamities of life, we have a refuge and aſylum in the proſpect of a bleſſed immortality.

CHRIST

CHRIST, the captain of our ſalvation conducting us through the grave and gate of death to a glorious reſurrection, gives a new direction to our aims, opens a new proſpect to our views, diſpels our doubts, elevates and eſtabliſhes our hopes, raiſes, ennobles, and enlarges our joys, and gives a ſecurity, peace and comfort to the whole man. How glorioufly does the Love of God triumph in ſuch a revelation, in ſuch a ſcheme of redemption vouchſafed to blind, to frail and ſinful creatures? What darkneſs, what malady, what miſery is there in human nature, to which the light, the truth, the promiſes and comforts of the goſpel are not equal? The organ and object, our wants and the ſupply of them in the natural world, are not more fitted to each other, than our moral infirmities and capacities, and the proviſion made for them by the goſpel of God.

FEARS diſpelled, and the clouds of ignorance diſperſed; ſin pardoned, and peace reſtored;

reſtored; ſtrength and grace adminiſtered, death conquered and glory promiſed, a reſurrection manifeſted, and immortal life aſſured; all the gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt, ſpeak ſo much of love and mercy, as nature though diſtreſſed, before the diſcovery would ſcarce have believed poſſible, and which from its exceeding greatneſs the modern unbeliever will not admit as credible.

INDEED what is man, that God ſhould have this reſpect unto him, or the ſon of man that God ſhould thus regard him? But if man is like a thing of nought, the more is the Divine Providence manifeſted in the care of him. If man is worſe than nothing, and an actual tranſgreſſor of the divine law, the divine mercy is ſtill more magnified in his pardon and redemption. "Herein," ſays the apoſtle, "was the love "of God manifeſted, not that we loved "him, but that he loved us, and ſent his "Son to be the propitiation for our ſins."

Here

Here the Divine Love riſes from great to aſtoniſhing and myſterious; we cannot ſee the juſtice and moral fitneſs of the innocent ſuffering and dying for the tranſgreſſions of the guilty; or how ſinful man ſhould be pardoned, accepted and rewarded for the obedience and purity of another: all that we can ſay on this ſubject is that we have the word and revelation of God himſelf for the truth of this œconomy of grace, and that in this caſe mercy triumphs over juſtice; and that the other attributes are ſubſervient to, or ſwallowed up in the love of God, and that his mercy is indeed over all his works.

SOMETHING of this we perhaps obſerve in nature as well as in grace. We ſee men long and daily ſupported, and ſupplied with thoſe bleſſings which they daily and wantonly abuſe; delivered by that Providence, which they deſpiſe or diſpute; and preſerved by that God, whom they traduce or blaſpheme, and in fact by their practice deny. Mercy is, and we may boldly affirm, muſt be

be the ſovereign attribute of heaven: for could men or angels aſcribe any thing to themſelves, or challenge any thing as their own, they were independent of God. The cherubim and ſeraphim have no more of intrinſic or independent power, excellence or glory, than the meaneſt worm, or pooreſt reptile of the earth; nor contributed more to their own creation, exiſtence and heavenly faculties.

To conclude; the univerſe comprehending every order and ſpecies of being, animate and inanimate, ſenſitive, rational, and ſpiritual, a combined and connected chain of eſſence and excellence puſhed on from matter to motion, to life, to reaſon, to grace, to glory and immortality, is all the free efflux and perpetual efficiency of an Almighty Father: "For of Him, and "through Him, and to Him are all things: "to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

DIS-

DISCOURSE VII.

1 JOHN iv. 16.

GOD is LOVE.

THE Love of GOD is a ſubject which will employ the ſongs of angels, and yet after innumerable ages ſpent on the pleaſing theme, remain unexhauſted, and perhaps ſtill half unſung. In vain then ſhall mortal man attempt to do juſtice to this divine attribute, or to comprehend and ſufficiently celebrate

celebrate the infinite Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.

LET it then be ſufficient for us to know that GOD is LOVE, though we may not comprehend the height and depth, the meaſure and extent of this love: and under the conviction and influence of this gracious principle, let us form ſuch maxims and practical concluſions, as may become thoſe who are the objects of the divine love.

1. IN the various appearances of nature, and the revolutions of ſtates and empires, which we cannot in every inſtance reconcile to our ideas of rectitude, equity and goodneſs, and which may ſometimes ſeem leſs favourable and friendly to the common intereſt and happineſs than our wiſhes might ſuggeſt in theſe caſes; to relieve the diſtreſsful mind, and calm the agony of perplexing thought, let it ever be remembered, that GOD is LOVE: it is He who rules in the whirlwind, and directs the ſtorm: it is He who

who convulſes nature, and gives a commiſſion to war, to peſtilence and famine, to lay waſte and to deſtroy the nations of the earth.

THIS principle, that God is LOVE, fixed as a rock immoveable, the foundation of our faith, will ſmooth to us the horrors of nature, ſtill the tempeſt, and pour light and order amidſt the darkneſs and ſeeming miſrule of the elements. Nature ſtaggering from her poiſe will not ſhake our tranquility; and the laws of order reverſed will not diſturb our repoſe. The mind divinely principled will ſhew itſelf ſuperior to matter and motion: and a philoſophy the child of heaven will ſleep in peace, though rocked by tempeſts at ſea, or convulſions of the earth. Repoſed in the boſom of our Father and our God, we ſhould be as free from fear, as we muſt be ſecure from danger: and knowing that love worketh over all, we may with ſerenity look on, "though the foundations of the

"earth

" earth be removed, and though the moun-
" tains be carried into the midſt of the ſea."

2. NOR ſhould we be anxious or impatient at the particular part aſſigned us in the general courſe of nature, confident as we are, that the whole is eſtabliſhed and adminiſtered by Sovereign Love. The duties to which we are called will be chearfully ſubmitted to as a regimen preſcribed by our great Phyſician for the health and preſervation of body and ſoul: the ſorrows we are ſubject to are the ſtrokes of love, the wounds of a friend. Who then can murmur or complain that ſuch a hand afflicts him? It is true the ſenſe may ach, and nature groan in diſtreſs, but while we are aſſured that Love is the inflictor, piercing only to heal, and caſting down only in order to relieve and recover the patient, and by momentary pain to enlarge his pleaſure and advance his happineſs, reaſon itſelf muſt approve and adopt that patience and reſignation which religion recommends. What though a note

or

or two in the compoſition ſhould ſeem harſh and grating to the ſenſe, yet ſatisfied that a Divine Hand ſtrikes the lyre, we may, we muſt approve and applaud the whole as juſt, regular and harmonious? Be it then your comfort, that you co-operate with, and conſent to the great Author of the univerſe, and act the part aſſigned you whether high or low, pleaſing or unpleaſing, in the general chorus of nature. You may not command armies, and fight battles; you may not preſide in ſtates and direct councils, or extend empires; but you act a no leſs acceptable part to the God of the univerſe, by ſubmitting to the authority of your ſuperiors, by the obedience of a ſubject, or the fidelity of a ſlave. Love reſpects not the pompouſneſs of the part, but the ſincerity of the ſervice; and humility, meekneſs, patience and reſignation, though they may be called arduous, and have the appearance of mean and ſordid virtues, are perhaps the kindeſt and happieſt inſtances of duty, to which the goodneſs of God could call you,

as tending moſt to temper, to ſoften and ſubdue your fiercer paſſions, to raiſe and refine your moral nature, to wean you from vanity, vice and folly, from groſſer habits and ſordid attachments, and thereby to approve and recommend you the more to the favour and acceptance of your heavenly Father.

3. A SENSE of God's paternal character, and that his name and nature is love, ſhould carry us ſtill further than patience and reſignation. It is not enough that we barely ſubmit to; we muſt willingly and cordially accept the good pleaſure of God; it is not enough not to flee from, we muſt go forth to meet the allotments of providence, as our bleſſed Maſter did to meet the traitor Judas. Can we will better for ourſelves, than God wills? It is my Father's cup, and ſhall I not drink it? was a queſtion, a reſolution we may call it, not more pious than rational, not more heroic, than wiſe and prudent? Whatever is preſented to us by

by ſupreme goodneſs muſt in the end or iſſue tend to our good. Knowing that our God is mighty to ſave and to deliver us, we may with confidence and chearfulneſs truſt ourſelves and all our concerns to his gracious diſpoſal. Our conduct, our prayers under the ſevereſt trials, ſhould be like that of the holy Jeſus: "not my will, O God, but thine be done." Though the draught preſented us be bitter, yet remembering that it is heaven, tempered and held out to us by Almighty Love, can we doubt of its wholeſome contents, and ſalutary effects?

As evil, natural evil, when conſidered as the allotment of heaven, loſes its malignity; ſo good, received as the gift of God, has a higher reliſh and flavour. When we lie down or riſe up, when we ſleep or wake, conſidering ourſelves as attended and ſurrounded by his preſence who is mercy itſelf, and whoſe goodneſs is extended over all his works, we are as it were naturally led to ſomething more than acquieſcence and an

inſipid tranquility. We conſider ourſelves as the children of God, enlivened by his breath, conducted by his hand, and ſupported by his providence; we meet with God in all our walks, and in ſome degree contract that ſpirit of love and benevolence, which we ſee imparted to all his creatures; how can we hate thoſe, whom we conſider as the objects of God's Love, or deſpiſe thoſe, whom God thinks worthy of his ſupport and protection? Or ſhall we not rather conſpire with the ſcheme of the Creator, in loving thoſe whom he loves, and in bleſſing thoſe whom he bleſſes. Senſible of God's mercies, we deſire to ſhew mercy, and to expand that love with which we find ourſelves inflamed. Our love to others ſhould bear ſome proportion to the love which God has ſhewn to us; we ſhould forgive much, becauſe we have much forgiven; and having nothing properly that we can call our own, we ſhould freely communicate to others of the bounty of heaven.

God

God conſidered as the Creator, Preſerver and Father, and Chriſt Jeſus as the Redeemer of all men, repreſent all men to us in the relation of brethren, of fellow-ſoldiers in the warfare, and fellow-travellers in the journey of life; and as ſuch entitled to all the offices of friendſhip and brotherly affection. If we have a true ſenſe of the relation we ſtand in to God as our Father in Chriſt Jeſus, we ſhall love all men as God has loved us; and we ſhall think none below our notice and benevolence for whom Chriſt died. As we have freely received, we ſhall freely give, and elated with the proſpect of bleſſing and honour, of glory and immortality, we ſhall abound in every good word and work, that may promote our own, or the ſalvation of others. Happy in ourſelves, we ſhall delight to ſee and make others happy; and thus in the beſt manner imitate our Redeemer, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

It is natural to imitate thoſe whom we

love; and if the GOD of LOVE is our God, we ſhall like him, to the utmoſt of our ability, do good to all; as "he maketh "his ſun to riſe on the evil, and on the good, "and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the un-"juſt." The idea of the gracious God being thus become natural to us, and engraven on the ſoul by frequent contemplation of his perfections will transform our ſentiments, our paſſions and conduct into the ſame temper and complexion with itſelf; and man will become the image of his Maker.

4. BUT the God of Love carries us ſtill nearer to himſelf in our enjoyments and happineſs, than in the practice of our duty, and the imitation of his perfections. We have a joy ariſing from our preſent proſpects, as we find ourſelves ſurrounded with the bleſſings of his goodneſs, and inſtances of his mercy. We cannot caſt a glance above, or below, or around us, but we are preſented with the God of Love. We ſee all the ſeaſons revolving, and all nature fruitful

fruitful in its productions and labours for the uſe, the ſupport and delight of man. We ſee a creation not only uſeful, but beautiful, not only ſubſervient to our wants, but miniſtring to our appetites, not only relieving hunger, but regaling the taſte; feeding the ſmell, the eye, the ear with ſuper-numerary beauties, and ſupplying us at the ſame time with the benefits and elegancies of life.

So bountiful has heaven been, that the meaneſt are ſcarcely without their ſuperfluities, nor the pooreſt without their luxuries. If human nature has its wants and diſtreſſes, let us trace their origin, and obſerve their tendency, and how they are ſubſervient to the intereſts of the higher and moral world, and we ſhall ſtill acknowledge that GOD is LOVE. We ſee health impaired, but virtue eſtabliſhed or recovering; we ſee the body languid, but the ſoul renewed. We perhaps feel poverty or pain; but thereby we make acquiſition of fortitude, patience

and reſignation, of far more value and more precious in the ſight of heaven, than the beſt eſtate of health or fortune could have rendered us.

And if after all the bleſſings that diſtinguiſh the natural and moral world, it ſhould be ſtill objected, that life itſelf is but a ſhadow or a dream, let it ſtill be conſidered and remembered as no more than the dawn of our eternal day.

And here the GOD of LOVE appears with ſtill new luſtre and glory in his manifeſtations to the moral world; with fond admiration we behold his bleſſings advancing and progreſſive from nature and morals to grace and glory. The light reflected from heaven by revelation throws new beauty upon the creation of God, and gives a kind of divinity to fleſh and blood. Sin pardoned, God reconciled, and peace reſtored to the conſcience. The troubles of life ſwallowed up, the terrors of death and hell vanquiſhed,

and

and heaven opening its everlaſting doors that the ſons of glory may enter in. Theſe are bleſſings of ſuch immenſe value, that we can never ſufficiently adore and love the gracious Author of them. How muſt the heart beat with tranſport and ſwell with devotion, that knows itſelf ordained of God to eternal life? Viewing as we do the conſtitution of the preſent world, its numerous inhabitants, its infinite productions, its order, its beauty and bleſſings, we catch a natural enthuſiaſm by the ſurvey, and are almoſt tempted like the ancients to conſecrate every grove, and ſtream, and mountain, and to aſcribe the ſun, the moon and ſtars, and every ſtriking appearance in nature to the agency of ſome divinity; but when we conſider this world of wonders as the work of one Almighty Creator, ordained as a tranſient ſtage for momentary exiſtencies, and only preparatory to future and brighter ſcenes of life and light, of happineſs and glory, we are loſt in the contemplation of the immenſity of divine mercy;

and

and our faith is almoſt ſtaggered, not by the nature of the evidence, which the goſpel offers for its veracity, but by the nature and mightineſs of thoſe hopes and promiſes, which that goſpel offers to our faith and acceptance.

5. But the natural and rational reſult of the goſpel principle and promiſes, is a ſupreme love of that God, who has done ſuch great things for our ſouls, and a reſolution to do and ſuffer all things in ſupport of his truth, and in defence of our faith. Influenced by theſe principles and promiſes, the apoſtles and martyrs both of the earlier and latter times ſhewed themſelves ſuperior to pleaſure and pain, to all the temptations and terrors that moratlity could offer or inflict. In them nature was renewed or ſwallowed up by grace; and ſenſe and paſſion refined or conquered by glory: or rather, all their other paſſions were contracted into one, the Love of God, founded on faith in his promiſes, and admiration of his perfections.

Influ-

Influenced by this Love, they forſook their poſſeſſions, and the proſpects of honour and profit, they withſtood principalities and powers, they braved perſecution and torments, and ſhewed themſelves more than conquerors in life and in death. Their conduct was plainly the ſame with their language, "The Love of Chriſt conſtraineth us."

CHRISTIANS of modern times, eſpecially we of this age and nation, are not called to the ſame fiery trials in profeſſion of our faith, and in teſtimony of our Love to God. We do or may enjoy the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs, and ſhare at the ſame time of the bleſſings and promiſes of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

STAND forth, O man! look around thee, and conſider the goodneſs and mercies with which thou art ſurrounded. Review the evidences of thy religion, firmer than the foundations of heaven and earth; examine the

the contents; they preſent thee with more than crowns and empires; and faith ſincerely embracing, realizing, and applying thoſe contents to thy own ſtate and condition, will render it happy and illuſtrious, almoſt beyond expreſſion or conception. God is the Father of the univerſe, and your Father in Chriſt Jeſus: his providence and preſence attend you: his creation miniſters to your wants, your comforts and delight: his winds blow, his ſhowers deſcend, his fountains flow, his foreſts wave, his hills aſcend, his ſun and ſtars ſhine: and the whole preſents you with a temple filled with his preſence, reſounding with his praiſe, and exhibiting the traces of his majeſty and glory! He whoſe preſence fills the univerſe, is intimately preſent with thee! not in his works alone, but in himſelf: he numbers the hairs of thy head, and is as a ſoul within thy ſoul; the life of thy life, and the conſtant and perpetual ſpring of thy motion! He conſiders thy frame, he pities thy infirmities, and pardons thy ſins!

YOUR ſufferings, if you are corrected, are ſo many inſtances of mercy; your pains, if you feel pain, are the inflictions of a parent, ſolicitous for your happineſs, and labouring by every means to advance your beſt intereſts, and promote your ſalvation.

SEE heaven opened, and angels deſcend to bring you meſſages of peace and love: and the Son of God himſelf comes down from the boſom of his Father to live and die for your ſakes! The Almighty, the infinite, the all-gracious God, the GOD of LOVE is your preſent inheritance and poſſeſſion; the ages of eternity are your happy reverſion. What can you conceive, as ſecure and inviolable, free and independent of time and chance and change, fair and amiable and delightful, compleat and perfect in excellence, in happineſs and glory, that is not comprehended in an infinite and gracious God, and a bleſſed eternity? Conceive as well, and as high as you can of the infinite

infinite God, or infinite Love attended by infinite wiſdom and Almighty power, advancing from eternity in the diſplay of his perfections by the communication of all poſſible happineſs! Behold this earth bearing upon it the impreſſions and character of this Almighty Love! See it operating through all nature, forming, animating, and conducting to its proper end the whole univerſe of being; viſible in the frame, and attentive to the proviſion of a mite, as in the preſervation of a kingdom, or the formation of a world. See this love painted on every object of nature, the meaneſt as well as the mightieſt, on the moſt deformed and irregular, as on the moſt ſhapely, regular, and beautiful; on the horrors of winter as on the flowery verdure of ſpring, and diſtinctly heard alike in the tempeſt and whirlwind, as in the ſtill ſmall voice or whiſpering breeze; in the murmuring brook, as in the great and wide ocean. See Almighty Love opening its hand and fill-

filling all things living with plenteouſneſs; or ſparing and denying, but only to make us more ſenſible of our bleſſings; afflicting only to heal, deſtroying with no other deſign but to ſave; and hiding his face for a moment only to make us happy for ever!

See this Almighty and Infinite Love pouring itſelf gradually and progreſſively in juſt proportion with reſpect to time, perſon and place, as the ſubjects are able to receive it; advancing from nothing, to matter, to motion, to life, to reaſon, to ſpirit: from barbariſm to poliſhed manners, from philoſophy to faith, from nature and morals to grace, from grace to glory, from time to eternity. Here ſtand we ſtill, and ſend out the abſtracted, the piercing mental eye as far as we can into the region, the boundleſs region, the fathomleſs undeterminable ocean, the infinite abyſs of eternal happineſs, the ſphere and reſidence of Almighty Love and the habitation prepared for his adopted children. Conceive if you can from the preſent

preſent and actual, the poſſible and future effects of divine love; the opening ſpreading faculties of the ſoul, the ſplendor of brighter and ſtronger light, the manifeſtation of clearer and ſublimer truths, the fairer ſcenes of ſpiritual nature, and of angelical taſte and order, the ever-blooming fruits of immortal growth: mines of beauty for ever opening; fountains of good for ever flowing; floods of glory for ever burſting; tracts of happineſs for ever extending; fields of knowledge for ever enlarging; and the flame of love for ever ſpreading: and after all, the conceptions of men and angels can never do juſtice to the perfections of the infinite God and the riches of his eternal kingdom. But conceive I ſay of theſe in the beſt manner you can, as the productions of Almighty Love, operating in a ſphere of infinite ſpace, and in a ſucceſſion of eternal duration; and what, I pray you, ſhould be the temper and ſpirit of creatures, who can call this God their Father, and this eternal Kingdom their inheritance? Away with the terrors

of

of ſuperſtition, and the gloom of a melancholy devotion! "How great is his goodneſs, "and how great is his beauty" ſhould be the conſtant language of every genuine and rational ſervant of God! True religion and the truly religious will triumph in the exiſtence and perfections of God as a ſecurity for their own being and bleſſings. As God is the happieſt and moſt beneficent of beings, want of joy in his ſervants betrays a want of reſpect to his perfections, attributes and adminiſtration. Abject flatterers and crouching ſlaves beſt become the court and ſpirit of a bloody tyrant; but the beſt homage required by a bountiful and gracious prince is the gratitude and joyful acclamations of happy and delighted ſubjects. What can the empires or emperors of this world beſtow, compared to the riches of God, which are offered in Chriſt Jeſus? If the wounds of the ſpirit are moſt piercing and intolerable, the joys of the ſpirit ſhould be moſt animating and tranſporting; and what more powerful motives of joy can we con-

ceive than a gracious God, and a bleſſed eternity? Theſe are bleſſings which no violence can rob us of, no accidents deſtroy, nor time itſelf impair. If the effect in this caſe ought to be anſwerable to the cauſe, our joys ſhould be firm and unſhaken, as the promiſes, or the throne of God; inviolable as the bliſs of heaven, and unbounded as the ages of eternity. If we are not yet poſſeſſed of heaven, yet we have God for our preſent portion, in whoſe preſence alone, as in heaven ſo on earth, there is fulneſs of joy and pleaſures for evermore. We have the Works of God to delight and inſtruct us, the providence of God to guard and protect us, the ſpirit of God to comfort us, the promiſes of God to ſtrengthen and confirm us, the peace of God to ſettle and compoſe us, the love of God to inflame us, and all the Divine Attributes and Perfections engaged and aſſured to ſupport, to aſſiſt, and to abide with us for ever. In ſuch a preſence, and with ſuch a protector, all-gracious to give and to forgive; Almighty to ſave and

to

to deliver, what room for murmur, complaint or deſpondency? Or rather what room and reaſon have we not for complacency, exultation and triumph? In what difficulties can we be involved from which he cannot extricate us? To what ſolitude and diſtance baniſhed, whither his preſence and power does not extend? To what darkneſs or ſhadow of death can we be reduced, from which the arm of the Almighty cannot raiſe us?

WHAT can we behold in heaven and earth, which does not ſpeak the goodneſs and perfection of its Maker? To what region can we carry our thoughts that claims a void from his infinity and inſpection? Look backwards to the times that are paſt, or forwards to the ages that are yet to come; to the utmoſt boundaries of ſpace and the regions bordering upon nothing; and what or who ſhall limit the infinite and eternal eſſence, or preſcribe bounds to ſupreme and ſovereign Love? Secure in this Divine Preſence,

we may, we ought to rejoice evermore with joy unſpeakable and full of glory. "Who or "what ſhall ſeparate us from the LOVE of "CHRIST? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or "perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or "peril, or ſword? Nay, in all theſe things "we are more than conquerors through "him that loved us. For I am perſuaded "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, "nor principalities, nor powers, nor things "preſent, nor things to come; nor height, "nor depth, nor any other creature ſhall be "able to ſeparate us from the LOVE of "GOD which is in Chriſt Jeſus our "Lord."

THOUGH the LOVE of GOD is unmeaſurable, incomprehenſible and eternal, and our affections can riſe in no proportion equal to his attributes and perfections; yet theſe certainly, as they have a peculiar reſpect to our happineſs, ſhould in a peculiar manner affect our thoughts and conceptions, our paſſions,

paſſions, and the whole tenour of our conduct.

As God's love operates in every part of nature, and in every inſtant of time; our love to him ſhould be maintained, kept aliv eand exerciſed on every object that occurs, and on every occaſion that preſents itſelf. It is not enough, that we feel our ſpirits riſe, and good humour inſenſibly ſteal upon us, in our day of good things, or in the flowery ſeaſon and briſker pulſe of life; this is rather natural inſtinct than rational devotion; this laſt will be conſtant and uniform like its object. God treats all his children with the ſame diſcipline of love, though it may vary in the mode of adminiſtration, according to the nature of our caſe and of our wants; our joy ſhould therefore flow in the ſame even, clear and regular channel, whether we ſuffer drought, or our cup runneth over, whether our day is covered with clouds and thick darkneſs, or a brighter ſun ſhineth upon our tabernacle. What

abundant materials have we then for joy in the various ſcenes of nature, and in the various colours of our life and fortune! Whatever we ſee or ſuffer is the effect of love; wherever we direct our ſteps, we are conducted by the hand of love. The ſmalleſt atom of matter, the meaneſt reptile, every flower of the field, the lilly of the valley and the humbleſt ſhrub, no leſs than the Cedars of Lebanon ſuggeſt a leſſon of devotion; as in themſelves they ſpeak a Divine Hand, and are beſides neceſſary parts of that great and general ſyſtem of the univerſe, whoſe Author and Governor is Love.

How happy a principle or paſſion is this, which conſecrates as it were every object in nature, and every circumſtance and condition of life. It cheers our darkeſt, and adds luſtre to our brighteſt hours: it ſoftens the harſheſt notes to our ſenſes, as we know them no leſs the compoſition of a Divine Hand than the ſweeteſt, in the harmonious ſyſtem of the univerſe. Love gives an angel's

angel's ſmile to the ſickly cheek, gilds the tears of the penitent, and lightens the pilgrim's weary ſteps in the journey of life. Love finds, or makes every thing eaſy and happy around it; for it ſees God in all; ſees all things in the ſofteſt light, and in the moſt delightful view; enjoys every element and every ſeaſon, and has the pureſt taſte and fulleſt reliſh of nature's various productions and appearances, which the divine lover conſiders as the order of Providence and the effect of Supreme Love.

DISCOURSE VIII.

1 SAMUEL xvi. 7.

The Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

DIFFERENT objects muſt we know apppear in a different light to the different faculties, capacities and apprehenſions of the ſeveral beholders. No two characters can perhaps be more different than thoſe of a creature and its Creator, of a finite and an infinite Being, of a ſhort-ſighted

ſighted and ſinful mortal, and an all-preſent, all-perfect, and all-holy God. We may flatter ourſelves as we pleaſe with our ſuperior excellencies, yet the difference between the man and the brute, that is, between fellow-creatures, is as nothing when compared with that which lies between a frail mortal and an infinite and immortal God. But inſtead of mortifying ourſelves with this thought, let us endeavour to draw ſome moral and uſeful reflections from the ſubject before us, and to this purpoſe let us attempt, as much as our faculties will enable us, to obſerve the different light in which the conduct and actions of men appear to themſelves, and to the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh.

How God ſees things naturally, if we may uſe the expreſſion, or by the power and comprehenſion of a ſelf-exiſtent, unorganized and infinite mind we cannot underſtand; and the moral character which he has given us of himſelf as ſupremely perfect,

fect, righteous, holy, juſt and good is what principally falls under our preſent conſideration.

1. We hence deduce, that what is of high eſtimation and moſt precious in the eyes of men, muſt be often vile and contemptible in the ſight of God. Splendor, equipage, titles and dignities have their weight and value among the ſons of men, but to a righteous and holy God who eſtimates things by their intrinſic and moral value, they muſt appear as ſplendid phantoms, gay deluſions, and light as airy vanity. How often does God pour contempt upon princes, and humble the children of pride, that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence, and that men may learn that there is no reſpect of perſons or perſonal diſtinctions, of civil title or human pre-eminences, and artificial trappings or badges of honour with him. Purple and fine linen, the ſceptre and the crown, may attract and dazzle weak eyes, and gain the admiration of an untutored,

untutored, a barbarous and undiſtinguiſhing mob: the vulgar are ſtruck with the greatneſs of the hero, and of the general who commands armies, who fights and wins battles, who ſacks cities and lays kingdoms deſolate. "Saul hath ſlain his thouſands, and David "his ten thouſands," was the triumphal ſong of vulgar ſouls who looked no further than to outward appearances. But the righteous and holy God ſees and judges far otherwiſe: he beholds true greatneſs, the trueſt greatneſs which man is capable of in the tenant of a cell or a cottage, in him who commands himſelf, who conquers his paſſions, who forgives his enemies, who lives above the world, and from a conſciouſneſs of his own unworthineſs, humbles himſelf in the duſt before the throne of his God. The moſt eminent inſtance, the moſt diſtinguiſhed example of moral excellence and true greatneſs that ever appeared in human nature was the man Chriſt Jeſus. I do not here conſider as inſtances of this greatneſs the proofs he gave of his Divine

Power

Power and Godhead by the miracles he wrought, by his reſurrection from the dead and his aſcenſion into heaven: but ſee this Divine Character ſhrouding himſelf under a veil of mortality, ſubmitting himſelf to poverty and pain, to contempt and calumny, to be blindfolded, to be ſpit upon, to be buffeted, to be ſcourged, to be falſely accuſed and unjuſtly condemned, and to ſuffer the ſhame, the torture and death of a malefactor; to undergo all this without murmur or complaint, with calmneſs and ſerenity, with patience and perfect reſignation to the will of his Father and his God, to undergo all this from thoſe whom he came to ſave, and with his laſt breath to pray for theſe his murderers, is in moral reckoning ſuch an exhibition and diſplay of perfection and greatneſs of ſoul as never was and never can be equalled; becauſe no character in heaven or earth being equal in dignity to the Son of God, none beſides could deſcend ſo low, or be ſubject to equal indignities, ſufferings and humiliation.

Hence,

Hence, from his voluntary undertaking the work of man's redemption, and ſubjecting himſelf to all the miſeries which muſt attend the accompliſhment of his miſſion and miniſtry, from this ſignal and ſingular example of obedience to God, and love to man, proceeded that approving voice from heaven, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am "well pleaſed."

We may ſearch among the records of ancient ſtory, among the patriots, the princes, and philoſophers of ancient Greece and Rome, for patterns of patience, of fortitude, of heroiſm, but after all in the Babe of Bethlehem alone we find a humility and meekneſs, a reſolution and reſignation, a ſacrifice of ſelf to the intereſts and ſalvation of mankind, that muſt challenge our higheſt eſteem and gratitude, admiration and applauſe. But let men judge as they will, the moſt high and holy God, we may be aſſured cannot but accept ſuch a ſacrifice, if not in a legal ſenſe, yet on a moral account, as of more

value,

value, and more precious in his ſight, than all the prayers and ſacrifices, the ſervices and hallelujahs of men and angels. Nothing but holineſs can be acceptable to a holy God, and in offering him any thing beſides, we offer him the ſacrifice of fools. Hence we are naturally led to the

SECOND inſtance, wherein the judgment of men differs very widely from the judgment of God. Religion in the common eſtimation of men ſhould ſeem to be the adopting a particular ſet of opinions and principles from among the ſeveral parties and ſects of men; much faith or what is called faith without works; much zeal without charity; much diſpute and little devotion; much pride and little or no humility; punctuality in rites and ceremonies, but negligence in moral duties and in the weightier matters of the law. In ſhort, religion ſhould ſeem by the common practice to imply the higheſt eſteem and arrogant preſumption in favour of your own opinions, ſect and party, with

with the utmoſt diſdain, contempt, and deteſtation, perſecution, calumny and malice againſt all who differ from you, for with ſhame and ſorrow I ſpeak it I have known ſome of the higheſt form of ſaints, or pretenders to ſaintſhip moſt diſtinguiſhed for petulance and peeviſhneſs, for malignity, rancour and calumny: and was the devil himſelf to commence religious miſſionary, he could not, he would not wiſh to form diſciples of a different complexion or of a more infernal ſpirit.

But God ſeeth not as man ſeeth: religion, true religion appears in his eye, and muſt commend itſelf to his approbation under a different form and feature, with more of love in its heart, and more of heaven in its eye. True religion, if we may believe the goſpel and word of God, is more the devotion of the heart than the exerciſe of the head or the employment of the lip. It is the worſhip of God in ſpirit and in truth: it is the image of God renewed in man, form-

forming him to all holy tempers and diſpoſitions. It is a holy flame kindled by the love of God, and which burns up all the droſs and corruption of our nature. True religion is a flame of love conſuming all our malevolent affections, and warming and opening the heart to the kindlieſt and the moſt gracious and generous propenſities of our nature. Religion, like the ſource from whence it flows, "is merciful and gracious, "long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs, "not willing that any ſhould periſh, but "that all ſhould come to repentance." Charity we are aſſured is the capital, and as I may ſay, the crowning virtue of religion, and without which, our faith is a groundleſs confidence, our hope a vain preſumption, and our zeal miſguided and unwarrantable bigotry. Religion is humble, modeſt, meek and merciful, ready to forgive, willing to communicate, and happy in proportion as it contributes to the happineſs of others. Religion, true religion raiſes us above the form, to the power of godlineſs; from a

noiſy and talkative profeſſion to the practice of "whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are lovely and of good report." Religion has its ſeat in the heart, from whence it flows in never-ceaſing ſtreams of love to God and man. Religion, though it does not deſpiſe, it builds not its faith or hope, nor ſpends its zeal on rites or ceremonies: it is the new man of the heart which it moſt affects, and a body meet to be the habitation and a temple of the Holy Ghoſt. Religion raiſes us above the world and the things of the world, has its converſation in heaven, and holds ſecret and ſweet communion with God, with ſaints and angels. It ſeeks firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, dwells with pleaſure on its future proſpect, and lets its thoughts wander with pleaſing tranſport through the joys and glories of eternity. In ſhort, religion is to know and believe in God and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent. It is to ſee God in all appearances, to acknow-

knowledge him in all events; to live in him, and to love him above all things.

FROM this ſhort ſketch of religion as it is repreſented to us in divine revelation, we may obſerve how different a thing it is from that which paſſes for religion in the opinions and practices of men, and that in this reſpect therefore "God ſeeth not as man ſeeth," too much of what is called religious ſervice by the ſeveral ſects of religioniſts being ſuch as God hath not commanded, hath forbidden, and which he will therefore condemn.

THINK me not tedious, my brethren, if I have ſomewhat enlarged upon this head, it is of the utmoſt conſequence and of the higheſt moment to the ſalvation of your ſouls that you ſhould not be deceived on this ſubject, nor build your eternal hopes upon what hath no foundation in the word, and will find no acceptance in the ſight of

God. Religion then, once more, is not types, or ſhadows, or ceremonies, or ſacrifices, or human ſyſtems, the inventions of men. Religion is not faith alone, though you could remove mountains; nor zeal alone though you ſhould give your body to be burned; nor knowledge though you could ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels. Above all, let me again and again remind you that religion is not the particular, the private, the proud, the pragmatical principle and opinion, the unſociable and unchriſtian ſpirit, by which the factious leaders and the members of any party would arrogate ſalvation to themſelves to the excluſion and damnation of all who differ from them. But religion, true religion, and what will alone find acceptance with God, is to love him, and to keep his commandments. It is a heart and ſoul devoted to him as to our ſupreme and only good, our happineſs, our perfection and glory. Religion is this ardent love of God centred in the heart, and thence diffuſing itſelf through

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all our actions and affections, producing in us the good fruits of purity, peaceableneſs, humility, patience, charity and good will to all mankind; diſpoſing us to love, to help, and to forbear and "forgive one ano-"ther even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath "forgiven us." Religion is the ſpirit of God within us, raiſing us above the pomps, the pleaſures, the riches, the glories and vanities of this world. It is not a ſacrament or a prayer, it is a life of prayer; it is not an act, but a habit of devotion; it is not a chance thought of God and heaven, but a powerful, a living, a conſtant and delightful ſenſe of his preſence, perfections and future kingdom of glory. Would you offer to God a ſacrifice well-pleaſing. Let me tell you in one word that religion is the life of God in the ſoul of man, purifying and renewing all his affections, charming them into order, peace, and love, to holy hopes, to heavenly aſpirations, and a bliſsful expectation and longing for the viſion and enjoyment of God in glory.

DISCOURSE IX.

1 SAMUEL xvi. 7.

The Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the Heart.

WE have already ſeen in what a different light the grandeur and religion of this world appear in the ſight of man and in the judgment of a righteous and holy God. There ſtill remains another inſtance in our mortal ſtate concerning which

there can remain no doubt, "that God ſeeth not as man ſeeth."

PERHAPS we are no where more deceived than in the common notions we form of happineſs and miſery. To be gay, to be great, to figure in the public walks and ſplendid ſcenes of life, to preſide in the councils of the prince, or to blaze in the ſunſhine of the court, to be cloathed in purple and fine linen and to fare ſumptuouſly every day, to have riches, honours and pleaſures at command; theſe in the common eſtimation are what compoſe the ſum and ſubſtance, and higheſt perfection of human happineſs. But God and his angels who behold things through the medium of pure reaſon obſerve the happy man, unnoticed and unknown by the world, an inhabitant of the ſilent ſhade, of ſtill retreats and flowery ſolitudes, great becauſe above ambition, a conqueror becauſe ſuperior to pleaſure, rich becauſe content with his fortune, and maſter of his time,

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ſerene and ſatisfied becauſe reſigned to the will of heaven, and inſpired with hopes full of immortality. We call the proud and the proſperous happy, while, we affect to pity and lament the condition of the modeſt and the meek, the poor and perſecuted, and all thoſe who are appointed to tread the rougher paths or the more private walks of life, but eternal wiſdom forms a different judgment, and gives a different ſentence; God himſelf hath declared by his Son Chriſt Jeſus. "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit; bleſſed are "the meek; bleſſed are ye when men ſhall "revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall "ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſly "for my ſake; rejoice, and be exceeding "glad; for great is your reward in heaven." This is to weigh and pronounce upon things as they are, not as they appear to the ſuperficial obſerver. Moral good, muſt certainly appear to him who weigheth the ſpirits as far ſuperior to natural, and the virtues and graces of a much higher and happier

pier order than the outward accomodations, the gaudy trappings, the ſplendid follies and lying vanities of life. By theſe I mean riches, pleaſures, titles and honours, which only play round the head, ſooth vanity and imagination, and gratify the baſer and mortal part of our nature, while the former, that is, the practice and operation of virtue, grace and truth, affect, improve and exalt the inner man of the heart, beget a communion with, and procure the favour of God, and are happy in a good conſcience, and the hopes of future glory.

THE very low condition and circumſtances of the poor, which ſeem ſo diſtreſsful and pitiable in the eyes of wanton and faſtidious obſervers, are not only tolerable but generally attended with more real pleaſure, and a truer reliſh of the bleſſings of nature and providence, than fall to the ſhare of thoſe who poſſeſs more abundance, and enjoy with more extravagance, who are ſtrangers to the pleaſure of gratifying a craving appetite,

appetite, or of a ſupply ſent to relieve an urgent want. The very afflictions and calamities which we lament in others, may poſſibly be ſeen and ſent as bleſſings by the Father of ſpirits. They correct our bewildered fancies, they reduce our vain imaginations, they humble our pride, mortify our luſts and paſſions, rectify the obliquity, and purify the corruption of our nature; they draw us from ſenſe to ſpirit, from nature to grace, from earth to heaven, from the creature to the Creator; while the pomps and pleaſures we ſeem to admire and envy, ſerve only to inflame the paſſions, they heighten the malignity and corruption of nature, they hide us from ourſelves, they eſtrange us from virtue, they ſeparate us from God, and divert our views from the proſpect and bleſſed kingdom of immortal ſpirits. Thus it frequently and generally happens that where we ſee or think we ſee a rich, an honourable and therefore a happy man, God ſees only a vile and unhappy ſinner. Where we behold and pity

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the miſerable lazar, God regards the future angel. Where we deſpiſe meanneſs and poverty, God ſees and approves patience, penitence and prayer, devout reſignation, and heavenly peace of mind. While we look out for happineſs in the pomp, the magnificence and ſplendor of a court; God and his angels find it in the ſhade, in the ſolitude and ſerenity of the righteous man.

We purſue pleaſure on the lap of dalliance, in bowers of fragrance and draughts of nectared ſweets, whereas God has more frequently annexed it to the wilderneſs and the ſolitary place, to the arduous attempts of virtue and the mortification of the appetites and paſſions: we look on, and abhor death as a horrid monſter made only to deſtroy and devour, to damp the joys, to cloud, confine and abſorb the proſpects and pleaſures of life; but God ſees and ſends it as an angel of light, to diſperſe the darkneſs and cancel the miſeries of mortality, to ſtrike off the fetters of our priſon-houſe and to conduct

conduct us to light, to liberty and glory. Thus in the three great articles which are of moſt concern and moment in the buſineſs of human life it appears that "God ſeeth not as man ſeeth," that our common opinions are no better than vulgar errors; and that man, while he is buſied in the ſearch, and miſtaken in his judgment of real greatneſs, true religion, and ſincere happineſs, "walketh in a vain ſhew, and "diſquieteth himſelf in vain." To be great, to be holy, to be happy to purpoſe, we muſt unlearn and renounce the prejudices contracted by our commerce with the world. We muſt conform our opinions to the mind of God, and reduce our notions to the ſtandard which he has given us of truth and true wiſdom in the page of nature, in the dictates of reaſon, but above all in the Book of Revelation. For inſtance,

1. WOULD you be truly great, you muſt humble yourſelf in the duſt and lay down all your pride and pre-eminence, the diſtinc-

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tions of birth, fortune, and family, nay even the pride of your virtues, and your moſt diſtinguiſhed graces at the foot of the croſs of Chriſt, if you would have them find acceptance with God. Indeed in a moral reckoning and in the eſtimation of reaſon, nothing can be more mean, more ridiculous and contemptible than pride in duſt and aſhes. A worm aſſuming more than the prerogatives of a God, and looking down with diſdain on his fellow-worms. Would you be great indeed, you muſt be little in your own eyes, and as nothing in the ſight of the infinite, the eternal, the all-perfect, and all-glorious God. Pride and pomp, foppery and finery may anſwer your views if your ambition extends no farther than to catch the ſtupid ſtare and admiration of the mob, for they chiefly regard the outward appearance; but you muſt be adorned with the graces of the ſpirit, with the ſimplicity, the modeſty, the humility, the ingenuity and innocence of little children, if you would gain the approbation of that God who

who weigheth the ſpirits. Thus, though it may not be in your power, as it is in the power of but few to figure in the eye of the world, and to attract obſervance and reſpect by the vanity of dreſs, or the ſplendor of their equipage or outward appearance, you may, the meaneſt of you may by the reſignation and ſubmiſſion of your will to the will of God, by meekneſs and lowlineſs of mind, by humility and charity be ſervants, and ſaints, and ſons of God, and ſhine in the kingdom of your Father, as the ſtars for ever and ever. If you cannot ſubdue kingdoms, you may ſubdue your luſts and paſſions, you may humble your pride, you may reſtrain your reſentment, you may quell anger, you may reduce luſt and concupiſcence, in ſhort, no monument may record your thouſands ſlain, nor may you perhaps poſſeſs thouſands of gold and ſilver, but you may poſſeſs your ſoul in peace and patience, you may conquer yourſelf, you may conquer the world by ſpurning its pleaſures and reſiſting its temptations; a

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fairer victory and a nobler triumph than the ſlaves of avarice and ambition ever boaſted. Would you be truly great and inſpired with the nobleſt ambition? Stoop not your ſpirit to pleaſe madmen and fools, nor confine your views below the ſkies. "Seek that "honour which cometh from God only." Aſpire to a communion with ſaints and angels; and in ſuch a manner that they may acknowledge you as their brethren, that they may viſit your habitations, aſſiſt your meditations, and convey your prayers to the throne of grace. Be great in daring to be juſt, in daring to be virtuous, in daring to profeſs your faith, and hopes, and chriſtian principles, in oppoſition to the favour or faſhion, the terrors or allurements of a degenerate and ſinful world. Though you may not make a figure in the eye of the world, by the ſplendor of your equipage and expence, or by the badge of offices and honours, you may be diſtinguiſhed and dear in the ſight of God by the diſcharge of duty and a good conſcience in the humbleſt ſtation

tion of life. You may be truly great by deſpiſing the vulgar trappings of greatneſs, and by ſubmitting to the meaneſt offices of life for God and conſcience ſake. Chriſt Jeſus was indeed great in his native character as the Son of God, and in that glory which he had with his Father before the creation of the world. But would you view him in his moſt exalted character? his greatneſs was moſt conſpicuous, and his glory moſt compleat when he deſcended from heaven, "and waſhed his diſciples feet."

2. THUS, again you will obſerve in what reſpects your religious ſervices, it is not what you do to pleaſe man, or in conformity to the will of man that will find acceptance with God. A heart devoted to him, humbled by his power, adoring and ſubmitting to his wiſdom, faithful to his word, reſigned to his will, ſenſible of his goodneſs and captivated with his love, is the moſt acceptable ſacrifice you can offer to your Maker, and far more precious "than thou-

"ſands of rams, or ten thouſands of rivers "of oil." When you remember that God ſearcheth the heart and reins, and trieth the ſpirits of men, you muſt be convinced that true religion does not conſiſt in the labour of the lip, or the bending of the knee, in forms or poſtures or outward ſeemings, in ſacrifices or even in ſacraments. Theſe, though required are only ſo far proper and acceptable as they are expreſſive of the affections and devotion of the heart; nay, I dare venture to affirm that coming to church is not religion, it is only the means of religion, and becomes then your reaſonable and acceptable ſervice, when your thoughts go along with your prayers, and your affections and deſires riſe to heaven with your praiſes and thankſgivings. Common ſenſe might tell us, was not the word of God clear upon the point, that profeſſion without practice, and faith without works, or a true faith with a bad life, right principles with a wrong conduct, are ſo far from juſtifying, that they muſt only ſerve to aggravate the condemnation

tion of the ſinner. If true religion is a communion of the heart with God, what communion we aſk hath light with darkneſs, or Chriſt with Belial? Deceive not yourſelves, my friends and brethren, in confining religion and ſalvation to a mere profeſſion, to a church, a ſect, or a party. It is pride, rank pride and not piety, that engages ſo many hot and uncharitable bigots in defence of doubtful diſputations and the doctrines of men, while they forget or loſe ſight of the great maſter-graces and goſpel-virtues which are eſſentially neceſſary to build up the perfect man in Chriſt Jeſus. Modeſty and moderation, humility and charity, meekneſs and gentleneſs, brotherly kindneſs, peace, purity of heart, and affections raiſed above the world, will recommend you much more to the favour of God than angry contentions for modes of faith, and bitter malice and invective againſt all who differ from you. Theſe we certainly know are of the devil, and therefore recommend you not to God. He principally requires the ſacri-

fice of your heart, the ſacrifice of your paſſions, the putting off the old man with his deeds, and the renewal of your fallen nature to righteouſneſs and true holineſs.

TEARS ſhed in ſecret for your own ſins, or for the ſins of others. Alms given in private, nay the ſilent aſpirations of your heart after God; injuries forgotten, or an enemy forgiven; a ſingle, an ardent eye to Heaven, ſpeak more the ſpirit of true religion, than a thouſand learned arguments, or ten thouſand volumes of ſchool divinity wrote in its defence. You may be the viſible members of the moſt orthodox church upon earth, yet while you are void of the ſpirit, and have hearts eſtranged from the love of God, you form no part of the communion of ſaints, nor have any title to the kingdom of glory. Ceremonies may be, nay are decent enough, and modes and articles of faith are proper to preſerve the weak and wandering mind from error and extravagance; yet after all, modes and ceremonies are but the

the outward robe, or the fringes of the robe, but the body, or I ſhould rather ſay the ſoul of true religion is "worſhipping God in "ſpirit and in truth." You may be papiſt or proteſtant, or a diſſenter from both, and a flaming bigot in defence of your particular perſuaſion, but in vain you cover yourſelf with a name, and diſguiſe your pride and ill nature under a pretended zeal for principle, while your hearts and affections are not right towards God, while your luſts are unſubdued, your paſſions unmortified, and humility and charity have no place as articles in your chriſtian creed, or as virtues in your chriſtian practice. The ſame mind, the ſame temper muſt be in you which was in Chriſt Jeſus, if you would ſit down with him in the bleſſed kingdom of his Father. A ſtedfaſt faith, a lively hope, the love of God, and of the Lord Chriſt Jeſus, devout exerciſes, holy and heavenly affections, are the trueſt marks of the elect, and the ſureſt proofs that you can have, of your being ſincere members of the true and catholic church of

Chriſt Jeſus. Be it then your principal care to worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth, for God, who is a ſpirit and weigheth the ſpirits of men, ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him.

To recommend this to your practice and particular attention, I ſcarce need to tell you that true religion is the foundation of our trueſt happineſs. This ariſes not from any ſhowy or ſuperficial appearances, from high rank and great fortune, but from peace of God within, and from the proſpect of glory which he holds out to us. Hence learn to envy no man the figure he makes in life, and do not charge God fooliſhly for ſometimes beſtowing on the wicked and the worthleſs, what contributes nothing to their preſent, or their future and eternal good. Make God your friend, and you will feel comforts more and greater than mortality can beſtow. His preſence will conſecrate your ſhade, and give ſplendor to your cottage, will ſoften your pillow, and render

render every ſtation eaſy and happy. That you have the approbation and applauſe of man, may flatter your vanity and contribute to your pride, and give the little head a tranſient or ſhort intoxication; but peace of ſoul, and ſolid joy muſt be had from the approbation of conſcience and of God. In the deepeſt diſtreſs, or the moſt lonely ſolitude with God for your friend, you have more comfort and ſupport than all the world beſides can afford you. Labour therefore to purify your heart, that it may be a meet habitation for God and his ſpirit. Cultivate the graces of the humble, the modeſt, the retired chriſtian. So far as you affect vain ſhew, outward pomp, and ſuperficial ſplendor, ſo far as you endeavour to attract the eye of the public and the admiration of mankind, ſo far you depart from God, and from the happineſs and honour which cometh from him only. Would you be indeed happy, walk with God in private; converſe with God in your cloſet; tell of his praiſes in

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his holy temple, or breathe out your wants and wiſhes in ſhort ejaculations and the ſilent whiſpers of your ſoul. God is ever preſent with you, ſees you in the darkeſt ſhade, and hears you from the deepeſt ſolitude; and if God is ever with you, hears your prayers, forgives your ſins, and has adopted and loves you as his children, the world with all its pomps, its pleaſures, its kingdoms and glories will appear to you as no other than a painted cloud, or a gaudy dream that paſſeth away. If you would be truly great, ſincerely holy and ſubſtantially happy, you muſt devote yourſelves to God without reſerve. His favour, the light of his countenance and the proſpect of his glory and kingdom, will be to you more than all the friendſhips, or the wealth and empires of the world, and will give you a ſweet, a ſecure and conſcious peace, a joy which no man can take from you, and an honour great and invaluable as the preſence and perfections of God can render it. Make it your main

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buſineſs to approve yourſelves to God, and then you have nothing to fear from the opinions and cenſures of men. Render yourſelves meet to be partakers of the bleſſings of God, and you will want nothing to fill up the meaſure of your happineſs.

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DISCOURSE X.

GENESIS xxxix. 2.

And the Lord was with Joſeph.

THE ſcriptures were of old, divided by the Jews (and the diſtinction is ſtill retained) into three parts; one of which they termed hiſtorical, another prophetical, and the other holy. This laſt was peculiarly thus denominated from the pſalms and hymns it contained, which were more immediately directed to and employed in God's ſervice;

ſervice; and from thoſe other declarations and deſcriptions in the book of Job, the Proverbs, &c. wherein the power, wiſdom and goodneſs of God, are ſo magnificently celebrated.

But without cavilling or finding fault with this title of holy appropriated to one part of ſacred record, we may properly and ſtrictly apply it to the whole; for as in the natural world it is ſaid, that wiſdom reacheth from one end to another mightily, and ſweetly doth ſhe order all things; ſo in the moral world, the providence of God extendeth to all; and the ſacred hiſtory, which is no other than the hiſtory of the world, as far as it goes, is at the ſame time, the beſt, the only true account of God's dealings and diſpenſations with mankind, from the creation till the redemption by Chriſt Jeſus.

The whole temple was ſacred, with its veſſels and utenſils, though there was one place

place in it by way of eminence, ſtiled, the holy of holies, and diſtinguiſhed by God's eſpecial preſence. The high and holy one, though he reſides with ſtill more reſplendent glory in heaven, yet fills heaven and earth, the ſea and all deep places; and the whole creation is a temple conſecrated by his preſence. Thus though one part of ſcripture may be diſtinguiſhed by the title of holy, as breathing a higher key of devotion, and filled with more lofty ſtrains of piety, yet is the whole ſacred; the authors were inſpired, the ſubject is divine, the moral god-like, and the language worthy of heaven.

In the natural world God's power and attributes are more viſibly and ſplendidly diſplayed in the great and magnificent works of creation; as in the ſun, that rules the day, the moon and the ſtars that rule the night; in the great and wide ſea, or in the bulk and compaſs of the earth, ſelf-ballanced, ſuſpended in æther, and ſupported upon nothing; but yet the ſame power and attributes

tributes of God, are not leſs actually, though not ſo manifeſtly extended in the very ſmalleſt productions of nature; and the Divine Hand may be read and ſeen in the frame of a fly, as much as in the formation of a world.

THUS in the ſacred ſtory, though the God-head may ſeem more apparent, and ſpeak as it were more audibly in one paſſage than another; yet we may hear his voice, and trace his ſteps in every place. His providence, it will be readily acknowledged, was manifeſt in the greater revolutions of ſtates and empires; and upon examination we ſhall find it was no leſs active in the private concerns of families, and in the proſperous and adverſe fortune of individuals.

THE Lord, it will be allowed, was with David and with Solomon his Son; but it muſt alſo be inſiſted, "that the Lord was with Joſeph."

To prove this providential interpoſition and direction in all human events, it may be proper to examine into this ſhort hiſtory of Joſeph with ſome attention and care, and to raiſe ſuch moral reflections upon the ſeveral parts of it, as may more ſtrongly impreſs upon our minds a belief of God's ſuperintending eye, and all-directing goodneſs in the various fortune and tranſactions of mankind.

1. THE firſt account we have of Joſeph, is, that "when he was ſeventeen years old, "he fed the flock with his brethren, with "the Sons of Bilhah, and with the Sons of "Zilpah, his Father's wives; and Joſeph "brought unto his Father their evil "report."

HERE is an inſtance of youthful wiſdom and piety not common to be met with. Joſeph was at an age moſt flexible, and moſt liable to be corrupted: youth are generally more daring in guilt from a preſumption of a long-

a longer life wherein they may repent; and from their thoughtleſſneſs of damage or danger, in which they have had little experience. To this may be added, that Joſeph had the example and encouragement of brothers to forward the bad inclinations of nature, to ſtifle the firſt remonſtrances of conſcience, and to keep back the riſing bluſh upon a firſt tranſgreſſion. But this notwithſtanding he preſerved his integrity; he was more ſhocked than tempted by his brothers' crimes; and out of a zeal more pious than may be judged prudent, related to his father their guilt and their infamy.

THE conſequence was natural: his father loved him for his piety, no doubt as well as becauſe he was the ſon of his old age; and his brethren hated him for this ſame piety, we may conjecture, as well as for the preference given him in the affections of a father.

BUT Joſeph was at an age not to conſider conſe-

conſequences; not to think, I mean, in the way of human prudence; he had not learn'd to diſſemble his ſentiments, and to ſtifle his conſcience, in order to avoid inconvenience, and to prevent ill will. He conſidered not danger, but duty, and was reſolved to expreſs his zeal, though it might have proved, as it did prove to the hazard of his being.

THIS would be called ſuperſtition or folly by the worldly wiſe; but is after all the trueſt wiſdom. To fear him who has in his hands the iſſues of life and death, "to fear "him, who is able to deſtroy both body and "ſoul in hell," is certainly a conduct more rational than to ſerve temporary ends by impious means, and to attempt to gain the favour of men, though we thereby incur the diſpleaſure of God. True wiſdom will firſt and principally ſeek the favour of heaven; and herein will not be diſappointed: For

2. WE learn that by two ſucceſſive viſions, Joſeph's youthful piety was encoura-

ged and ſupported; and a promiſe made him, in the figurative ſtile and manner of thoſe days, of higher honours, and a diſtinction of place and eminence ſuperior to that of his brothers and family. Theſe viſions were aſſuredly from heaven; for they were in fact real prophecies, and had, in a few years after, their accompliſhment. His brethren indeed envied and hated him yet the more for theſe viſions; which no doubt in obedience to the ſpirit of God he could not conceal.

His obedience to his Father was no leſs remarkable than his obedience to God; for "Iſrael ſaid unto Joſeph, do not thy bre-"thren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, "and I will ſend thee unto them. And "he ſaid unto him, here am I." Joſeph makes no excuſes from his ignorance of the road, or the danger that might attend his ſolitary journey, or from the apprehenſion of his brethren's cruelty, with whoſe unkindneſs he could not but be well acquainted; but

but he ſaid unto his Father, "here am I." He miſſed of his brethren, and wandered in the field. But we are never alone, while God is with us. We cannot wander beyond the eye of God; we cannot be loſt, while the providence of him, who neither ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth, is perpetually watching over us. Though Joſeph was at a diſtance from, and might be ſaid to be forſaken of father and mother, the Lord took him up. It is ſaid indeed, that a certain man found him; but ſome of the commentators on this paſſage ſay, that it was an angel that found him. But let this be as it will, man or angel, he was plainly the meſſenger of God, to conduct his ſervant Joſeph in the way wherein he ſhould go.

3. He came to Dothan; here he met not with the affections of brethren, but the purpoſe of murderers. Come, let us ſlay him, was the general cry; one only, his brother Reuben, ſpoke for Joſeph, that he might deliver him. In this no doubt

"the Lord was with Joſeph;" or how had one voice prevailed againſt the common note, if God had not turned their hearts? Nay, it is probable that Reuben's humanity was the work of God. For as he was the firſt-born of Jacob, he ſhould in the way of nature, have leſs brooked, and more reſented his father's fondneſs and preference of a younger ſon. And yet this very circumſtance of his being the firſt-born, might probably be the principal means to effect Joſeph's delivery. He had thence more authority, and greater power to prevail with his brethren.

4. At his interceſſion Joſeph is delivered from the ſword, and caſt into a pit; to periſh by famine or wild beaſts. "But the Lord was ſtill with Joſeph." What we call chance, is the order of ſupreme wiſdom; what we call fortune and fate, is the direction and providence of God.

Thus a company of Iſhmaelites coming at this time from Gilead, might appear

pear to a ſuperficial obſerver no more than chance, but was plainly by the event, a circumſtance ordered by God, and productive of the higheſt conſequences to Iſrael, as well as to Egypt; of the utmoſt importance to Joſeph's brethren, as well as to himſelf.

We may alſo learn from this part of the hiſtory, that God deduces good from evil, and makes the unreaſonable paſſions of men ſubſervient to his wiſe purpoſes; for it does not ſeem, that it was any principle of piety or humanity, whatever was pretended, but a motive of intereſt, that induced Joſeph's brethren to ſell him to the Midianites; and this ſeems ſtrongly implied in Judah's ſpeech upon this occaſion. "And Judah ſaid un-
"to his brethren, what profit is it, if we
"ſlay our brother, and conceal his blood?
"come and let us ſell him to the Iſhmaelites,
"&c. And they ſold Joſeph to the Iſhma-
"elites for twenty pieces of ſilver." Had humanity and affection to a brother been the motive of this bargain, they would have offered

or accepted eaſier terms; they would have inſiſted more upon his kind treatment, than the price of a brother's head.

To this I may add, that Reuben, by the complaint that follows, ſeems to have been a ſtranger to this bargain; and for any thing that appears to the contrary, they choſe rather to defraud him of his ſhare of the profit, than to remove the diſtreſs of his ſoul, by acquainting him, that "Joſeph was yet alive."

5. He was alive, and in the land of Egypt; which is the next account we have of him. To human judgment his circumſtances here could not be the moſt eligible; at a diſtance from his father, and friends and country; in a land, to whoſe manners he was before, a ſtranger, and to whoſe religion he muſt be ſtill, an enemy; bought and ſold as a ſlave; at the nod of a maſter whoſe word was law, and whoſe commands it might be death to diſobey. But no country

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is ſtrange, where God is preſent; no condition is miſerable, if God is our ſupport; we are never abſent from our father, or our friends, if God is with us. "But the Lord was with Joſeph;" no wonder then that he "was a proſperous man; and that he found "grace in the ſight of his maſter." "God "can make even our enemies to be at peace "with us;" convert a tyrant into a friend, and raiſe the ſlave to be a favourite. There is a charm in a religious conduct, which none can reſiſt; a beauty in acting the conſcientious part, which every eye muſt admire. A good man wears the ſtamp of heaven, which gives him a currency in every clime. The virtues of pure religion are ſo amiable, as to melt down the hardeſt heart. None but a brute or a bigot, the infidel or immoral can hate honeſty and truth; the devil only or his emiſſaries, can bear malice to goodneſs, and perſecute the pious, the meek and patient ſervants of God. Nay, Egypt was a land famed for its bigotry and cruel ſuperſtition; and Potiphar, no doubt as an

officer of Pharaoh, and a courtier, was of the ſtate-religion, and a conformiſt to the pious frauds and follies of his country; yet bigotry had not extinguiſhed his moral ſenſe; he could ſtill ſee and reverence goodneſs in the conduct and character of Joſeph; he experienced his fidelity and truth, and put an entire confidence in this faithful ſervant. He made "him overſeer over his "houſe, and all that he had he put into his "hand." Joſeph's condition now appears not only tolerable, but eaſy; not only ſecure and free from danger and want, but attended with plenty and circumſtances of honour. He was entruſted with his maſter's property, and admitted to his heart.

6. But ſuch is the nature of human happineſs, that we are never perfectly ſecure but under the protection of the Almighty. Joſeph had undergone perſecution, the terrors of death, and the miſery of ſlavery; but greater difficulties ſtill await him from the allurements of pleaſure. His maſter's favour

vour was indeed a bleſſing; but the kindneſs of his miſtreſs was a curſe; he had experienced his brothers' malice and hatred, but this love was more cruel than both. The one threatened his life, but the other endangered his virtue; his brothers could but torment his body, but Potiphar's wife attacked his ſoul.

THE danger was upon this occaſion greater, as Joſeph may be ſuppoſed to live within the precincts of a court; his maſter was a courtier, of near relation to his prince's perſon; he was captain of the guard; and the manners of a court are infectious; example has a greater weight than law; and the practice of the great contributes more to reform, or corrupt the body of the people, than the ſtrongeſt legal ſanctions, or eſtabliſhments of a ſtate. Egypt has always been eſteemed a land of plenty, and therefore not leſs inclined to luxury; licentiouſneſs and pleaſure, we may at leaſt preſume, were no ſtrangers in the court of Pharaoh. Religi-

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on and morality have not been often the ſtandard of practice in any court; and leaſt of all in the court of an abſolute prince. His will is law, and his favour the only ſtep to place and honour; hence his paſſions are flattered, his pleaſures alone conſulted, and his very crimes applauded. In courts too often, the very virtues loſe their name, and vice itſelf is ſoftened and ornamented by new terms and polite appellations. Religion is ſingularity; piety, preciſeneſs or ſuperſtition; and honeſty, ill manners; on the other hand, craft is termed wiſdom; knavery, policy; adultery is called intrigue, and guilt but mere gallantry. A taſte is ſubſtituted in the room of virtue; convenience ſupplants truth; ambition is glory, and faſhion the ſtandard of morals; till at laſt the diſtinction of right and wrong, of moral good and evil, is in a great meaſure cancelled and forgotten. And this general depravity was much more likely to prevail in a heathen, than in a chriſtian court. The religious ſyſtem of Egypt was, according to the

the general voice of antiquity, the moſt abſurd, and hence we may preſume, that their morals were not the moſt perfect.

To theſe outward circumſtances, by no means favourable to the ſupport of Joſeph's virtue, we may add thoſe of a perſonal kind, his age and ſituation. He was in the bloom of youth; when the paſſions are moſt ſtrong and commanding, and reaſon immature, or not attended to; when ſenſe governs the whole man, ſhuts out conſideration, and generally ſtifles all pious conviction. Beſides this, the luſtful exceſſes of his brethren, Judah and Reuben, were domeſtic examples and leſſons of lewdneſs. Not to add, that Reuben's crime was more atrocious, than even this could have been; nor could Judah plead any pretended neceſſity, or alledge any danger from ſlighting his daughter Tamar, as Joſeph in this caſe might do.

RESENTMENT from a ſlighted paſſion has

has often produced the moſt dreadful effects. The hatred that ſucceeds to love is the worſt of hatred. Here it was not a ſingle paſſion, but a complication of paſſions. Diſdain, contempt and revenge muſt ſwell her heart by turns, who had ſought the bed of a ſlave, and had been refuſed. Potiphar's wife had deſcended from her dignity and departed from her innocence; without hopes of any return of her paſſion, or concealment of her guilt. She muſt view herſelf in the moſt abject light; a criminal without the falſe pleaſure of a crime; liable to diſcovery, and expoſed to infamy for no actual commiſſion; below her very ſlave; reproached by his virtue, and depending on his mercy. Hence muſt naturally ariſe the agony of rage, and the thirſt of revenge; to deſtroy the ſuppoſed offender, and prevent her future ruin. Circumſtances were much in her favour. The great power and poſſeſſion, that were given to Joſeph of all his maſter's goods, might be ſuſpected to have raiſed his ſpirits, and inſpired his ambition

bition to attempt the heart of his miſtreſs, the only treaſure not intruſted to his care. At leaſt a tender huſband, and one jealous of his honour, would naturally, for the ſake of his peace and his fame, rather receive the report of his wife, than the calumny, as it might be called, of a ſlave. He would for his own ſake believe her innocent, and him a traitor. His wife's impregnable virtue ſuppoſed, flattered his own ſelf-love: Whereas Joſeph's teſtimony to her falſehood, had it been admitted, might have expoſed him to the ſcoffs and reproaches of a cenſorious world.

FROM all this, Joſeph could not but foreſee the ſtorm that threatned him: yet in ſpite of pleaſure and of pain, againſt temptation and danger, he proved himſelf more than conqueror: for this was the memorable reply to the ſolicitations of his miſtreſs. "Behold, my maſter woteth not what is "with me in the houſe, and he hath com-"mitted all that he hath to my hand; "there

" there is none greater in this houſe than I;
" neither hath he kept back any thing from
" me, but thee, becauſe thou art his wife;
" how then can I do this great wickedneſs,
" and ſin againſt God?" Thus was the Lord ſtill with Joſeph, preventing him now by his grace, and over-awing him by his preſence; as he had before preſerved and delivered him by his Providence.

7. FROM hence we may obſerve the great power of religion to reſtrain mankind from wickedneſs. For, had Joſeph been a mere moral man, or one who had diſcharged himſelf from all principles of faith, and obligations of conſcience, he might have ſaid with the adulterer in Eccleſiaſticus; " Who ſeeth me? I am com-
" paſſed about with darkneſs: the walls
" cover me, and no body ſeeth me; what
" need I to fear? The moſt high will not
" remember my ſins." " Such a man on-
" ly feareth the eyes of man, and knoweth
" not that the eyes of the Lord are ten
" thouſand

" thouſand times brighter than the ſun, be-
" holding all the ways of man, and conſi-
" dering the moſt ſecret parts." What ſe-curity hath the maſter for the integrity of his ſervant; what ſecurity had Potiphar for the fidelity of Joſeph, ſuppoſing no eye of God to obſerve, no juſtice of God to pu-niſh, the crimes of mortals? Conſcience has no bond or object, if you take away " the terrors of the Lord."

HONOUR is a feeble principle, when plea-ſure tempts, and paſſion urges, and intereſt invites to immoral indulgence. Honour has for its object the eye and opinion of the world; but ſuppoſe this opinion may be avoided, and this eye cloſed; what further remains to reſtrain a man of honour from the moſt atrocious villanies? He only re-ſpects the public eye; and when he can eſcape its notice, whatever is convenient is lawful. To do a mean thing, is in the language of a man of honour, to do what may reflect upon his credit, or tarniſh his character.

character. Now, to all human appearance Joſeph might have preſerved both his character and credit, and yet have violated his maſter's bed. No crime, or a crime unknown, are with reſpect to the public notice, the ſame. And in this caſe of Joſeph's, there was no fear of a diſcovery, for "there "was none of the men of the houſe there "within." So that Joſeph, upon the principles of an infidel, might have been an adulterer, and yet a man of honour.

EQUALLY ineffectual to promote an univerſal and ſincere moral practice, are all the injunctions of law, which are not enforced by the ſanctions of heaven. Could men but be ſecured from the penalties annexed to the breach of God's laws, they would be very feebly influenced by human terrors. Had Joſeph had nothing but the laws of Egypt to fear, and the puniſhment they annexed and denounced againſt his tranſgreſſions, he might have tranſgreſſed as often as he could have evaded thoſe laws, and eſcaped

eſcaped that puniſhment, that is, as often as power enabled, or privacy invited him.

It may be ſaid indeed, that gratitude was a motive more powerful than law to this conduct of Joſeph; and that it would have been the baſeſt and fouleſt return to the confidence of a bountiful maſter, to have abuſed his bed and expoſed his honour.

To this it muſt be replied and acknowledged, that there is a juſtice, a fitneſs and decency in good-will expreſſed, in fidelity retained, and benefits returned for benefits received; and of this every virtuous, every generous ſoul is deeply ſenſible: but ſtill it muſt be inſiſted, that what is juſt, and fit, and decent, is far from being a ſufficient rule and effectual law of life to the bulk of mankind; for we ſee daily inſtances, wherein all order is reverſed, all decency violated, and juſtice trampled on by men who trample on the laws of God. Self is, and will be the ruling principle of every man, who

confines his proſpect to his preſent being; and he who is blind to the mercies, and ungrateful for the favours of God, can never have any proper ſenſe, or feeling, of what it is to be grateful to man. To a ſhort-lived being, who, as he ſuppoſes, carries his all about with him, every thing muſt appear in the light of loſs and profit. He will be grateful for favours received, as far as that gratitude may procure him more and future favours; but he cannot otherwiſe, conſiſtently with the rules of prudence and common ſenſe, diminiſh, on any account, his ſtock of preſent good, who has no hopes of a future retribution.

BESIDES, ingratitude is a crime, to puniſh which no human laws can be provided; and an unbeliever thus diſcharged from all obligations divine and human, is in ſome ſort invited to neglect and forget his benefactors, and to return, if occaſion were, hatred for their good-will.

HENCE

HENCE we are led to conclude, as no doubt Joſeph was, that religion or the fear of God is the only ſure and ſufficient foundation of morality; and that he only may be ſafely depended on, as faithful to men, who retains upon his ſoul a juſt reverence for God.

To make this religious principle more effectual and ſteady in reſtraining us from evil, or puſhing us on to do good, it may be proper that we frequently revolve, and recall to our memories thoſe paſſages in ſacred writ, wherein the attributes of God, particularly his all-perfect knowledge, and univerſal preſence are moſt particularly, and awfully deſcribed, and with a few of which I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe. "God filleth "all in all. Can any hide himſelf in ſecret "places, that I ſhall not ſee him, ſaith the "Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth? "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, "beholding the evil and the good; where-

" fore then doth the wicked contemn God
" and ſay in his heart? How doth God
" know? Is there knowledge in the Moſt
" High? Can he judge through the dark
" cloud? The Lord ſhall not ſee, neither
" ſhall the God of Jacob regard it; God
" hath forgotten, he hideth his face, and
" he will never ſee it. But ſurely, the Lord
" beholdeth ungodlineſs and wrong to re-
" quite it. The Lord knoweth the mani-
" fold tranſgreſſions of the wicked, and
" their mighty ſins; he will never forget
" any of their works; for his eyes are upon
" the ways of men; and there is no dark-
" neſs, nor ſhadow of death, where the
" workers of iniquity may hide themſelves."

DIS-

DISCOURSE XI.

GENESIS xxxix. 21.

But the Lord was with Joſeph.

WE have thus far conſidered ſome of the actions of our Patriarch in the firſt ſtage of his life, the inſtances of his filial obedience and youthful piety, the ſufferings he underwent in God's cauſe, and the deliverance wrought for him by God's providence. But we have hitherto ſeen only

the bright ſide of his virtue, and the dark and diſmal part of his fortune. The ſcene we laſt beheld him in, was that of triumphant chaſtity; we ſaw him upon the principles of true religion, performing faithful duty and ſervice to his maſter, and bravely reſiſting the criminal paſſion of his miſtreſs.

8. And what was the reward of his faith and conſtancy? How did God or man diſtinguiſh this ſhining example of piety and virtue? He may ſeem to be now forſaken of both. The guilty woman gained credit to her falſhood; the innocent youth ſuffered for maintaining his integrity and truth. He incurred the diſpleaſure and rage of his maſter, the forfeiture of his credit and place, with bonds and impriſonment.

And had God left him here, we might, and Joſeph might juſtly complain. As life and immortality were not then ſo fully brought to light, as they have ſince been by the

the revelation of Chriſt Jeſus, Joſeph's preſent ſufferings, not ſupported by a clearer knowledge of his future proſpects, might ſeem to leave a ſtain upon providence, and to give room to cenſure the juſtice and mercy of heaven. "But the Lord was ſtill with Joſeph." It ſeems to have been by a miraculous interpoſition of heaven, that an injured, or rather a provoked huſband, and an injured maſter, did not immediately in the height of his paſſion, revenge himſelf on a perfidious ſervant, or at leaſt, put the laws in execution againſt ſo baſe a criminal. Though God may ſeem to delay, he never forgets to ſend help in time of need to his faithful ſervants. Joſeph's preſent ſufferings gave new trial to his faith and truſt in God; as God's mercy to his ſervants is more manifeſt, more ſenſibly felt, and more gratefully acknowledged, when it is diſplayed in their deliverance from imminent dangers and the moſt preſſing calamities. It is then like a light ſhining in a dark place, more illuſtrious by the ſhade, and gaining

glory by the gloom. Had Joſeph been advanced by eaſy and natural ſteps from honour to honour, without let or interruption, had he paſſed immediately from the embraces of a fond father, to be the favourite and miniſter of a King of Egypt, and never known ſorrow; as he could have given no proof of his ſubmiſſion to providence under no ſufferings, ſo he could have felt and expreſſed leſs gratitude for no deliverance.

SUFFERINGS muſt in the nature of things, and under the preſent conſtitution and temper of the world, be frequently a good man's lot; and for no other reaſon, but becauſe he is a good man. In a general corruption of morals, a good man muſt be a block of offence. An honeſt man, will be obnoxious to thoſe who love, and live by falſhood. Should general infidelity be the faſhion, the ſincere chriſtian muſt incur the diſpleaſure of moſt, by contending earneſtly for that faith, which they deſpiſe or hate; or ſhould idolatry be eſtabliſhed by law, the true

true ſervant of God, who worſhips him in ſpirit and in truth, muſt ſuffer perſecution, and undergo the penalties annexed to his obſtinate adherence to goſpel truth. Had we no trial, we could have no title or pretence to the mercies of Chriſt Jeſus. Had we no race to run, we could put in no claim to the prize of our high calling. Take away the field of battle, and you take away all neceſſity of contending, and all occaſion of triumph. Life is a warfare; in which every man living has his ſervice; a corruption of nature to ſubdue; a ſelf to deny, and ſpiritual enemies to conquer. Duty and conſcience point one way, inclination and intereſt lead another; ſo that we muſt in many inſtances renounce a preſent pleaſure, brave danger and the diſpleaſure of man, and welcome pain, or we cannot ſerve God acceptably, and keep a conſcience void of offence. Duty muſt have difficulty attending it, or it is not duty. We could give no proof of our ſincerity to God's cauſe, had we nothing to do or

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ſuffer for his ſake. To follow our own inclinations, is to ſerve ourſelves and not God.

FURTHER, the duty of religion is inſtant and urgent; but its rewards future and unſeen: preſent rewards immediately beſtowed for every act of duty, would depreciate the value of piety, and debaſe our reaſonable ſervice into a mercenary bargain. We ſhould in this caſe obey God for lucre's ſake; (as the multitude followed Chriſt for the loaves and fiſhes:) godlineſs would be but another name for gain: and every man would endeavour to excel in goodneſs, that he might abound in eaſe, in honours, in wealth and worldly happineſs.

UPON theſe accounts virtue muſt neceſſarily be ſometimes what we call a ſufferer: for theſe, among other reaſons, the Patriarch was now a priſoner. Not that true piety is ever in diſtreſs, nor are God's faithful ſervants ever deprived of ſufficient ſupport.

port. True happineſs is no where to be found but in true religion. A ſervant of God may indeed be deprived of the external and ſhewy part of what is called happineſs; but is more than recompenſed by the ſhare he enjoys of inward peace and ſolid content. He who makes God the ſupreme object of his love, can never be deprived of enjoyment. No bars or gates, or walls can exclude the ſpirit of God from a communication with our ſpirits; "and where "the ſpirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Joſeph indeed had no more the favour of his maſter; but he had what was more valuable, the favour of God: he had not any longer the delicacies of Egypt to eat, or the ſoft couch to repoſe on; but he had peace of conſcience; a mind unbroken, and a heart uncorrupted. He was indeed cut off from the converſe of the world; but he converſed with God: his body was confined, but his ſoul was free: a ſervant of God enjoys liberty in chains; ſees light in a dungeon, and feels joy in torments. True religion is

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the power of God, diſpelling our pains and our fears, enlivening our hopes, confirming our ſpirits, and exalting the powers of our frame above the frailties and feelings of mortality. Innocence in chains is not only a nobler, but a happier ſight, than guilt upon a throne. Joſeph the priſoner and the ſlave, with God for his friend, enjoyed a ſweeter peace than the monarch of Egypt.

9. BUT inward peace and ſoul-enjoyment, though the proper, yet is not all the reward of religion. "Godlineſs hath the "promiſe of this life, and of that which is "to come." Thus, Joſeph had not only the joy of a good conſcience, and the comfort of God's favour; but he received diſtinguiſhing marks of Divine Mercy in his outward circumſtances. "The Lord "was with Joſeph, and ſhewed him mercy, "and gave him favour in the ſight of the "keeper of the priſon." From this time Joſeph was no longer treated as a criminal, but

but conſidered as a friend of God and a favourite of heaven. He was not now in the condition of a priſoner, but had the charge of all the other priſoners committed to his hand. He was more the keeper than the kept, and directed and commanded rather than ſuffered and obeyed.

10. DURING his ſituation in theſe circumſtances, two officers of Pharaoh's are ſent priſoners to the dungeon. They have each their dream; which Joſeph by the ſpirit of God interprets; and begs of him, whoſe future advancement and reſtoration to his former place was foretold: "Think "on me, when it ſhall be well with thee, "and ſhew kindneſs, I pray thee, unto me, "and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, "and bring me out of this houſe. For in-"deed I was ſtolen away out of the land of "the Hebrews; and here alſo have I done "nothing, that they ſhould put me into "the dungeon."

HENCE

HENCE we learn, that we may and ought to take every opportunity that offers, by which we may honeſtly clear our character, eſtabliſh our credit, or better our circumſtances. We are not to expect miracles, or the viſible hand of God to be diſplayed in our defence or delivery from any preſſing calamity, when our own endeavours ſeconded by the bleſſing of Providence may effect the ſame end. Joſeph thought this occaſion, when Pharaoh's cup-bearer was to be re-eſtabliſhed in his former honours, and his maſter's favour, a proper opportunity to redeem his own perſon, and recover his country, and accordingly embraced it: and he could not expect leſs from a perſon whom he had obliged, than that he would make mention of his name, and have a reſpect to the cauſe of injured innocence, to the cauſe of an injured benefactor. "Yet "did not the chief butler remember Joſeph, "but forgat him." Ingratitude is the worſt, yet the commoneſt of crimes. It is but too common for thoſe who have enough, not to

to remember the time of hunger; and for thoſe that are rich, not to think upon poverty and need. Proſperity makes man forget himſelf. At a diſtance ourſelves from ſuffering, we are leſs ſenſible of what others ſuffer. It is plainly to this part of the Patriarch's ſtory, that the prophet Amoz alludes, when he deſcribes "thoſe who "drink wine in bowls, and anoint themſelves with the chief ointments; but are "not grieved for the affliction of Joſeph."

One reaſon no doubt of the different fortunes of mankind, and of the diſtribution of the general body into rich and poor, is that there may be a proper trial of the ſubmiſſion, contentment and patience of the one; and of the moderation, humility and charity of the other.

Again, we may learn from this part of Joſeph's hiſtory, not to truſt to the moſt probable human means, without God's aſſiſtance to our ſucceſs. By a diſappointment

ment in our own attempts, we are taught to place our confidence in heaven. The moſt likely cauſes often produce unlikely and unequal effects: "The race is not al-"ways to the ſwift, nor the battle to the "ſtrong; neither yet bread to the wiſe, "nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, "nor yet favour to men of ſkill."

THUS Joſeph, the interpreter of God, and who had a prince's favourite for his friend, was ſtill in form of a priſoner. On the other hand, accidents as they may ſeem, the moſt unexpected, frequently give a new turn to our fortune; when all our own juſt and reaſonable expectations had failed us, and our beſt attempts proved ineffectual. Hence we learn our own inſufficiency and weakneſs, and are taught to acknowledge God's ſupreme Power, and all-directing Providence. Hence Solomon with equal wiſdom and piety adviſes, "truſt in the "Lord with all thine heart, and lean not "unto thine own underſtanding; in all thy

"ways

" ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct " thy paths."

11. Two years had now at leaſt elapſed, ſince Joſeph's firſt impriſonment, or ſince the chief butler's advancement to his former office at court. So that all hopes from his friend's intereſt and interceſſion in his favour, were probably quite given up by Joſeph. And now God himſelf interpoſes for his deliverance; Pharaoh himſelf had two dreams, which none of the magicians or wiſe men of Egypt could interpret; the chief butler now recollects his own dream, and the interpretation by Joſeph; " Then " Pharaoh ſent and called Joſeph; and they " brought him haſtily out of the dungeon; " and he ſhaved himſelf, and changed his " raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh."

And here the ſupereminent power of God is again diſtinguiſhed; the learning and wiſdom of the Egyptians were in the greateſt credit and eſteem, among all the civilized and inquiſitive nations of the

known world: nay, the remaining monuments of their ſacred myſteries are yet thought worthy the attention and examination of the moſt learned critics. Yet how poor and inſignificant is all human ſcience, when applied to underſtand the myſteries of God. "The natural man receiveth not "the things of the ſpirit of God; for they "are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he "know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually "diſcerned." "The things of God know-"eth no man, but the ſpirit of God." The Egyptian ſages and philoſophers applied in vain their depths of ſcience, and reach of wiſdom to interpret the divine viſions; which the young man Joſeph, an Hebrew ſervant, with eaſe underſtood and explained. Thus the ſtripling David, armed with the power of God, eaſily overthrew the vain and boaſtful champion of the uncircumciſed.

THUS hath God from the beginning "cho-"ſen the fooliſh things of the world, to "confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen "the

"the weak things of the world, to con-
"found the things which are mighty; and
"baſe things of the world, and things which
"are deſpiſed, hath God choſen, yea, and
"things which are not, to bring to nought
"things that are; that no fleſh ſhould glo-
"ry in his preſence." Were we in all caſes ſufficient of ourſelves to help ourſelves, we ſhould not acknowledge much obligation to the aſſiſtance of heaven. Could we comprehend all neceſſary truth by the uſe of our own reaſon, we ſhould be leſs grateful for the benefit of divine revelation. Could we fulfil all duty by the ſtrength of our own natural powers, we ſhould not know the value of the ſpirit of grace; but God "weakeneth the ſtrength of the
"mighty, deſtroyeth the wiſdom of the
"wiſe, and bringeth to nothing the un-
"derſtanding of the prudent;" that we may ſee and confeſs our own inabilities; and thankfully acknowledge his Almighty Goodneſs in all we do, and all we know.

God frequently marks his own immediate agency by the inſtruments he employs in the execution of his purpoſes; that no man may miſtake his miraculous interpoſitions for the common courſe of nature, or receive his revelations as the diſcoveries of reaſon. Had the Egyptian magicians and wiſe men fully comprehended and explained the viſions of Pharaoh, their learning had been admired, and neither the God of Iſrael, nor his ſervant been regarded. And thus, had the goſpel been delivered in learned diſſertations by the ſcribes and phariſees of Jeruſalem, or by the philoſophers at Athens, it had probably been admitted as no other than the effect of genius, and the wiſdom of man. But, being preached by the carpenter's Son, and unlettered mechanics and fiſhermen of Galilee, his followers, it plainly proves itſelf the "power of God, and the wiſdom of God." Thus Pharaoh, we may believe, would have judged, from his ſentiments and conduct upon this occaſion. He knew that Joſeph was of himſelf no more than

than a Hebrew ſlave; a young man, and ſervant to the captain of his guard; who had not been brought up in the ſchools of the Magi, nor admitted to the myſteries of Egyptian wiſdom; that his learning was not the doctrine of man, nor his knowledge the cultivation of mere human ſcience. "And Pharaoh ſaid unto his ſervants; can "we find ſuch a one as this is, a man in "whom the ſpirit of God is?"

12. THAT this was not mere compliment, but the reſult of full and ſerious conviction, appears from Joſeph's immediate advancement to place and honours; which is the next thing taken notice of in the ſacred ſtory. "And Pharaoh ſaid unto Joſeph; foraſmuch "as God hath ſhewed thee all this, there "is none ſo diſcreet and wiſe as thou art. "Thou ſhalt be over my houſe, and ac-"cording unto thy word ſhall all my peo-"ple be ruled; only in the throne will I "be greater than thou; and Pharaoh ſaid "unto Joſeph; See, I have ſet thee over all

" the Land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took
" off his ring from his hand, and put it up-
" on Joſeph's hand, and arrayed him in veſ-
" tures of fine linen, and put a gold chain
" about his neck; and he made him to ride
" in the ſecond chariot, which he had, and
" they cried before him, bow the knee;
" and he made him ruler over all the land
" of Egypt. And Pharaoh ſaid unto Jo-
" ſeph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee
" ſhall no man lift up his hand or foot in all
" the land of Egypt."

HERE let us ſtop a moment to admire the Almighty Power and Providence of God, in this laſt and great revolution of the Patriarch's fortune; he might now ſay with the Royal Pſalmiſt; " I waited patiently for
" the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and
" heard my cry. He brought me up alſo
" out of an horrible pit, and ſet my feet up-
" on a rock, and eſtabliſhed my goings."
" For, if the Lord was with Joſeph" under the perſecution of his brethren, and the calum-

calumnies of his maſter's wife; "if the Lord was with Joſeph" in the pit, and in the priſon, we cannot doubt but that the providence of God was at leaſt equally diſplayed in his exaltation and honours.

His promotion was not in the common courſe of things, or by the ſlow and formal gradation from office to office, and from honour to honour. It was rather a leap, or a flight than a riſe. He had not ſeen himſelf at the bottom, before he was at the top of preferment. He was young and unexperienced, alike a ſtranger to the court, the cabinet and the camp. His birth was obſcure, and could give him no pretence or title, to place or pre-eminence. He was not ſo much as a native of Egypt, and might well be ſuppoſed ignorant of its conſtitution, its religion and laws. He had had no former opportunity to obſerve his maſter's temper, and to cultivate his favour, by flattering his foibles and follies, by ſecond-

ing his paſſions, and adminiſtring to his pleaſures. Nor had he rendered himſelf neceſſary to the monarch, by fomenting a faction, and by the arts of a party. He had beſides in his temper an inflexible integrity, and an innocence not to be corrupted; virtues, which are not always thought the moſt requiſite in the firſt miniſter of a prince. Thus Joſeph roſe to favour, without any of the arts or qualifications of a favourite; whence we may conclude (had we not further proof) that his promotion was miraculous, and by the ſpecial providence of God.

HENCE we are taught never to deſpair in the loweſt and moſt abject ſtate, in which the wiſdom of heaven may for the preſent place us. Nothing is too hard for God. If we truſt in him, he will never leave us, nor forſake us. God has generally diſtinguiſhed his moſt faithful ſervants by ſuperior ſufferings. By theſe "they are purified, and "made white, and tried." They are feeble and

and ſore ſmitten, that God may be glorifi-ed in ſtrengthening them; they are poor, that God may enrich them; they are debaſed, that God may exalt them; "though "now for a ſeaſon, they are in heavineſs "through manifold temptations, it is, that "the trial of their faith being much more "precious than of gold that periſheth, "though it be tried with fire, might be "found unto praiſe, and honour, and glory, "at the appearing of Chriſt Jeſus."

FURTHER, we hence learn not to judge of the love or hatred of God, or of the juſtice and wiſdom of his providence, from any preſent ſcene, or ſingle act in the drama of human life. We ſhould not be affected by the preparatory ſteps to any great event, when that event may prove happy and proſperous. The tempeſt that brings us to the haven where we would be; the earthquake that opens the priſon-doors, and ſets us at liberty, is reaſonable cauſe of rejoicing,

rejoicing, and not of complaint; ſickneſs ſucceeded by better health, and a ſounder conſtitution, would be no misfortune, but happineſs to the patient. And, labour for a time, to be ſucceeded by an eternal ſabbath; the poverty of a few years, the condition of an eternal inheritance, the title to riches that wax not old, eternal in the heavens, is, I may appeal to your own conſciences, what every reaſonable man would willingly and thankfully ſubmit to. The ſtorms of life are trifles, compared to a ſun that never ſets, and a glory that never fades. He ſurely would have been too haſty in his concluſions, who, ſeeing Joſeph a priſoner, though he was innocent, ſhould thence infer, that heaven was unjuſt. The very occurrences that ſeem moſt liable to objection, are often moſt neceſſary, and even moſt beautiful, in the ſcheme of divine providence. As here, the very circumſtance of Joſeph's being a priſoner, was, by the direction of God, the occaſion of his being intro-

introduced into Pharaoh's favour and preſence. And ſurely God's power and goodneſs were not meanly diſplayed, nor was Joſeph's pious gratitude more cold and languid, by this ſudden and unexpected remove from his abode in a priſon, to his reſidence in a palace.

LET us hence learn not only to ſubmit to, but thankfully to accept that portion in life, that God aſſigns us. Whatever he orders, is for our good. The beſt fortune of our own chooſing, is miſery when compared to the worſt of God's appointment. While we are under the guidance of heaven, we can never go aſtray. Under the wings of a divine providence, we can never ſuffer wrong. The eye of God is ever awake, and regardful of his ſervants. "The Lord will be a refuge for the oppreſſed; even a refuge in "times of trouble." Our intereſts are ſecure beyond the power of chance or time, againſt the malice of men or devils, while we have God for our friend, and the Almighty

mighty for our protector. If we be but careful to do our duty, we may ſafely leave the reſt to God. He will ſupport us under the greateſt ſufferings in his cauſe, and in his good time will remove, and reward them: "he "will maintain the cauſe of the afflicted, and "the right of the poor." Therefore, "de- "light thou in the Lord, and he will give "thee thy heart's deſire; commit thy way "nnto the Lord, and put thy truſt in him, "and he ſhall bring it to paſs; he ſhall "make thy righteouſneſs as clear as the "light, and thy juſt dealing as the noon- "day. The Lord ordereth a good man's "going; and maketh his way acceptable to "himſelf. Though he fall, he ſhall not "be caſt away; for the Lord upholdeth "him with his hand. The Lord loveth "the thing that is right, he forſaketh not "his ſaints that be godly, but they are pre- "ſerved for ever. O ye that love the Lord, "ſee that ye hate the thing which is evil. "The Lord preſerveth the ſouls of his "ſaints;

" ſaints; he ſhall deliver them from the
" hand of the ungodly: there is ſprung up
" a light for the righteous, and joyful glad-
" neſs for ſuch as be true-hearted."

DIS-

DISCOURSE XII.

Genesis xli. 46.

And Joſeph was thirty years old when he ſtood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and Joſeph went out from the preſence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

I Have, in the preceding parts of Joſeph's hiſtory, conſidered the actions of his life, which may ſeem of a more private and domeſtic nature; particularly his perſonal virtues and ſufferings, with the protection and ſupport God afforded him under the one, and the rewards he aſſigned him for the diſplay

play and exertion of the other. Now the Hebrew ſtranger appears on a more public ſtage; in a fuller, if not a fairer light, and diſtinguiſhed by honours and eminence, as much as he had before been by calamity and diſgrace.

And here the part he had to act was perhaps not leſs difficult, though more pompous, than that of his former part of life. Greatneſs is an envied, but a ſlippery ſtate. It has been generally found more ſafe as well as more eaſy, for virtue to maintain its ground, under adverſe, than under proſperous circumſtances. Neceſſity forces us to exert all our powers, and to ply all our nerves to keep us from ſinking under the load that preſſes us; and diſtreſs compels us to take refuge in heaven, and to cleave ſtedfaſtly unto God, when all human ſupport ſeems to fail us. But proſperity naturally relaxes our powers, and enfeebles the vigour of both body and mind; plenty tempts to enjoyment and immoral indulgence; as power often

often betrays us into acts of cruelty, and the exceſſes of pride, inſolence, and oppreſſion. It is not leſs difficult to enjoy abundance with moderation and piety, than to exerciſe command, and the higheſt offices, with humility and temper. Above all, it is obſervable that nothing ſo directly leads men to a denial of God, as an ample fortune. It is ſtrange but it is common, that men the moſt obliged are leaſt thankful to heaven; and make thoſe very mercies which ſhould ſtrike and preſerve in the ſoul a religious gratitude, or a grateful piety, an occaſion of forgetting God, and the inſtruments of wanton and graceleſs indulgence. A great fortune is beſet with great temptations. And the difficulty in practiſing virtue is proportioned to the eaſe and liberty, we may imagine to be allowed us of committing vice. A ſudden change of fortune is moſt apt to tranſport and corrupt the mind. Superior power and eminence of place, moſt frequently turn that head giddy, which has been confined to narrow

views and humbler proſpects. To be tranſplanted from a loathſome priſon to the air of a palace, might well have ſtaggered a virtue leſs divine than Joſeph's. But true religion is in every ſtate the ſame. It depends not on circumſtances of time or place, it renders the poſſeſſor alike invulnerable by every ſtroke of fortune; not elated by proſperity, not dejected under diſtreſs and misfortune; humble in the one, and firm and unmoved under the other. Joſeph was the ſame under the cloud, and in the ſun-ſhine; in the dungeon, and in the court; alike unſubdued by pleaſure, as by pain; and preſerving the equal tenor of his mind, under the diſpleaſure of his maſter, and when favourite to a mighty monarch. In this laſt character, his ſituation was moſt dangerous; as the hiſtory of favourites is often little more than the hiſtory of paſſion unbridled, and power miſapplied. And no one ever ſeemed to have a greater ſhare in his maſter's heart, than Joſeph had in Pharaoh's; yet he acted the part, and ſupported the character of firſt

miniſter

miniſter without committing the faults, or incurring the odium ſo frequently annexed, that it may almoſt ſeem inſeparable from this office. In other men, to recount the virtues they have, is the proper commendation; in miniſters and favourites, to be able to recite the faults they have not, is no ſmall degree of applauſe. Of Joſeph then we may ſay, and ſay without reflecting upon others, that he did not offend the eye of the public by a numerous train of ſervants and guards; that he did not attempt to make all ſtate and grandeur centre in himſelf. He did not accumulate wealth; He appropriated not the public treaſure to his own uſe, nor ſeems to have had any intereſts ſeparate from thoſe of his maſter. He did not indulge himſelf in pleaſures; he ſacrificed not the public good to gratify his own paſſions, ambition, avarice, revenge or luſt. It does not appear, that he denied acceſs to any; he treated not with contempt, or claimed any precedency of the princes of the blood, he did not engroſs the royal ear, and

exclude all others an admittance to the royal preſence; his miniſtry was not diſtinguiſhed by war and bloodſhed, but by wiſe regulations at home, by œconomy in the public expences, by the preſervation of the life of the ſubject, and by a careful regard to the prerogatives of the ſovereign. Thus much we may ſay in general of Joſeph's adminiſtration from the accounts of him handed down to us, both in profane and ſacred ſtory. But it may be proper to deſcend to particulars, that we may form a juſt idea of his character from what he did, as well as what he did not.

1. THE firſt action recorded of Joſeph after his admiſſion to royal favour, is, "that "he went out from the preſence of Pha-"raoh, and went throughout all the land "of Egypt."

HE ſtayed not to ſettle himſelf in his new acquired power, to engage more cloſely the affections of his maſter, and to ſhut out all competitors for any ſhare of their monarch's

monarch's favour; as he meant no ill, he ſuſpected none; he dreaded no ill offices from others, becauſe he projected and intended none againſt any man. He conſidered his honour as a burden, which he muſt ſupport, and attended with a duty, which he was firſt and principally bound to diſcharge.

2. In conſequence of theſe ſentiments we are next told, that "he gathered up all "the food of the ſeven plentiful years, "which were in the land of Egypt, and "laid up the food in the cities; the food "of the field, which was round about eve-"ry city, laid he up in the ſame. And "Joſeph gathered corn as the ſand of the "ſea, very much, until he left numbering; "for it was without number."

The prudence of this meaſure muſt be obvious to every one, and deſerving, if well conſidered, the applauſe of the reader, as well as the gratitude of the Egyptians. In

private life how frequently do we ſee the income of an ample fortune wantonly laviſhed away, and the poſſeſſor of a fair eſtate, by luxury and extravagance, reduced to nakedneſs and want? "When they "have enough, they remember not the "time of hunger; and when they are rich, "they think not upon poverty and need." In the public the ſame obſervation too often holds good; the revenues of peace, and the products of plenty, have been weakly if not wickedly ſquandered, and no reſources left for the future exigencies of the ſtate, no reſerve made of ſuperfluities, for times of diſtreſs and danger. But Joſeph's wiſdom is diſtinguiſhed by a different conduct.

3. NOR was he leſs prudent in the diſpoſal and diſtribution of what he had thus collected againſt the time of dearth. "The "famine was over all the face of the earth: "and Joſeph opened all the ſtore-houſes, "and ſold unto the Egyptians."

SOME

SOME might here be apt to ſay, that had the corn been given, rather than ſold, it had beſpoke more generoſity in the prince, and more goodneſs in the miniſter.

I SHALL content myſelf with aſſigning one obvious reaſon againſt the expediency of this imaginary generoſity. When men had to buy, and to buy in a time of ſcarcity, they would require no more than to ſatisfy their preſent needs; and by this means the royal granaries would be ſpared, and a ſupply remain for all: whereas had the corn been given, the people would have ſet no bounds to their deſires; luxury would have been indulged in a time of famine: no fund could have been ſufficient to anſwer all demands, when no reſtraint was laid upon the modeſty or moderation of the petitioners: and thus the ſtores laid up, would have been ſoon exhauſted, and the kingdom expoſed to famine and diſtreſs, without any remedy or reſource remaining.

THERE is one objection more may be formed againſt this part of the hiſtory, or rather againſt the Divine Conduct, which deſerves to be conſidered, as it more illuſtriouſly diſplays the wiſdom of Providence.

WHY, it may be ſaid, was this ſucceſſion of ſeven years of plenty, and ſeven of want? and why, did the abundance of the former ſupply the deficiency of the latter? Had not the ſame equal ſeaſons of moderate plenty, or ſufficiency, been better continued through the whole fourteen years? Had not hereby man's wants been more conveniently ſupplied, and God's goodneſs more fully and clearly diſtinguiſhed? Why might not the future famine have been as well prevented as remedied? or, why not rather, no famine, than a famine for which God had provided a redreſs?

IN anſwer to this objection it may be juſtly replied, that a conſtant and equal ſucceſſion of ſeed-time and harveſt, never inter-

interrupted by ſtorm or tempeſt, would look like the inflexibility of fate, or a ſettled courſe of nature. God may, juſtly and reaſonably for a time, deprive us of his bleſſings, when we forget that he is the Giver. And how common is it to aſcribe good or bad ſeaſons, to the clemency or inclemency of the elements, and to condemn or commend the weather, as the principal cauſe of our plenty and want? But if they that are full deny God, it is but juſt, it is merciful for God to deny them; and to withdraw thoſe favours, which beget ingratitude or forgetfulneſs in the receivers. The ſea hath overflowed, rivers have been diverted from their courſe, the ſun hath ſtood ſtill, and the ſtedfaſt earth hath trembled, to ſhew mankind that all nature is but an inſtrument in the hand of God, who can ſtop or accelerate its motions, alter times and ſeaſons, and command the elements by his Word. By theſe extraordinary interpoſitions of the Almighty, we are taught to look up to him through all his works, to conſider all his creatures as but

ſecond cauſes, dependent upon the firſt, and acting only by a commiſſion and command from Him. There is not a more common error among mankind than this of regarding effects, and overlooking the cauſe; of numbering the lower links in the chain of nature, without aſcending up to that which is faſtened to the throne of God. He therefore ſometimes arreſts, or ſuſpends the ſettled laws of creation, that man may ſee the viſible hand of Heaven, and acknowledge the ſupreme agency of Providence in all things here below.

SUCH an interpoſition was perhaps more peculiarly neceſſary in Egypt, than in any other country of the then known world. The inhabitants and people of this land were ſtrangers to true religion, or in the words of Pharaoh, "they knew not the Lord." They had indeed "Gods many, and Lords "many:" but with all their wiſdom and religion, they were ignorant of the ſupreme and Almighty JEHOVAH. I may add, that Egypt

Egypt was famous for its plenty and abundant harveſts, which frequently ſupplied the wants, and relieved the ſcarcity of other countries; and that this plenty was generally aſcribed to the over-flowing of their famous river the Nile, by the riſe of which, they computed the produce of their future harveſt. This ſtream was probably eſteemed ſacred from theſe beneficial effects produced by it. Hence when Pharaoh is ſaid "to go out unto the water," commentators have not without reaſon ſuppoſed that he went out to worſhip it. And therefore God might ſmite the river, and ſhew his wonders upon it, by the miniſtry of his ſervants Moſes and Aaron, to let the Egyptians ſee, that it had no power of itſelf, was no more than an inſtrument not an agent, an effect and not a cauſe. And hence it has been denounced as a peculiar curſe upon Egypt, and judgment from God; "The waters ſhall fail from the ſea, and the "river ſhall be waſted and dried up," But be this as it will; a ſtop put to the conſtant

ſtant round of plenty, was certainly proper and expedient to remind the Egyptians, that it was not owing to any powers in nature, or divinity of their river; and "that the "people might know," as well as Pharaoh, "that the Lord he is God," the ſupreme cauſe and director in nature, the diſpenſer of plenty and want, and the Author and Giver of all good gifts.

But ſtill it may be aſked, why ſeven, and not one, or two years of plenty and want? Why this ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature for ſo long a term? Why this profuſion of miracle? I anſwer, that ſhort-lived pleaſures, and ſhort-lived pains are alike ſoon forgotten. A tranſient bleſſing is next to none; it leaves no ſtrong impreſſion or grateful ſenſe in the receiver; or, is remembered, if remembered, with murmuring and regret, rather than with gratitude and pleaſure. It is the ſame in reſpect of calamities, which produce little good effect in the ſufferer, when the ſmart is ſcarcely felt before

before it is over. How frequent is it to forget thoſe judgments, which God in mercy inflicts for the reformation of the ſinner! If the ſtroke is ſlight, if the ſhock is tranſient, we ſcarce allow it to be the hand of heaven, but aſcribe it to nature, chance or fortune; to any thing, but that overruling power and providence, which orders all things in heaven and earth. But when the affliction we groan under, is permanent, as well as great; and not to be removed by any human means, we then are willing to aſcribe it to more than a human cauſe; we are indeed forced to apply to God, when we can find no other remedy; the impreſſion in this caſe, is laſting like the malady, and we cannot ſoon forget the hand that has long lain ſo heavy upon us.

To apply theſe conſiderations to the caſe of the Egyptians; had the famine they laboured under been of ſhorter continuance, and conſequently leſs grievous, the remembrance of it had by degrees faded, and in a few

few years been entirely effaced and loſt; and even the men of that preſent generation, who ſuffered by the calamity, had poſſibly aſcribed both the fertility and the famine, had they been but of a year or two's duration, to the large overflow, and extraordinary decreaſe of the Nile, the common meaſure of their plenty and want upon other occaſions. Hence their ſuperſtitious veneration of the river had increaſed; or, their Magi, ſo famous for their ſagacity in natural obſervations and aſtrology, had attempted to account for this ſhort change in the produce of their harveſt, from the powers of nature, or the influence of the ſtars. We may ourſelves remember a year of great ſcarcity of corn in this kingdom, ſucceeded by a ſeaſon of plenty; and ſome who thought themſelves wiſe in their generation, would willingly have accounted for both from obſervations in the weather, without acknowledging him, who "can number the clouds "in wiſdom, and can ſtay the bottles of hea-

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"ven; who viſiteth the earth and bleſſeth "it, who maketh it very plenteous; who "watereth her furrows, and ſendeth rain "into the little vallies thereof; who maketh "it ſoft with the drops of rain, and bleſſ- "eth the increaſe of it; who crowneth the "year with his goodneſs, and his clouds "drop fatneſs."

I MAY add, that this ſeaſon of ſcarcity, ſevere as we then thought it, was but ſhort: and might poſſibly be forgotten, or little regarded by us at this day, did not this ſubject and occaſion call it to our remembrance.

FROM our own conduct then we may judge, what would have been that of the Egyptians under a famine of ſhorter continuance, than that which God laid upon them. But now both the ſeverity and duration of it muſt make a deep and laſting impreſſion; the wiſdom of man was vain and fruitleſs to explain, or to relieve it; a ſervant of God is peculiarly choſen out to

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do both; and who is careful to aſcribe the whole tranſaction to the peculiar Providence of heaven. "What God is about to do, he "ſheweth unto Pharoah: "The thing is "eſtabliſhed by God; and God will ſhortly "bring it to paſs."

FROM theſe extraordinary circumſtances attending the famine of Egypt, it was probable, it would never be forgotten. It is accordingly remembred to this day, and recorded by profane, as well as the ſacred writers. The words of the heathen hiſtorian, Trogus Pompeius, as we find them abridged by Juſtin, are ſo remarkable, that I cannot but recite them. After mentioning Joſeph as the youngeſt of his brethren, his being ſold by them to foreign merchants, by whom he was carried into Egypt, where he became very dear to the king, he adds, that "he firſt expounded to the world the "knowledge of dreams, and nothing of di-"vine or human right ſeemed unknown to "him,

"him, ſo that he foreſaw the barrenneſs of "the country ſeveral years before it hap-"pened. And all Egypt had periſhed by "famine, unleſs by his advice, the king "had ordered by an edict the corn to be "preſerved for ſeveral years; and ſo many "were the inſtances of his ſkill, that his "anſwers ſeemed not to be given by a man, "but a God." *

I HAVE dwelt the longer upon this part of the hiſtory, that we who are alive at this day, and have this hiſtory of God's for-

*MINIMUS ætate inter fratres Joſeph fuit; cujus excellens ingenium veriti fratres, clam interceptum peregrinis mercatoribus vendiderunt. A quibus deportatus in Ægyptum, cum magicas ibi artes ſolerti ingenio percepiſſet, brevi ipſi regi percarus fuit. Nam et prodigiorum ſagaciſſimus erat, et ſomniorum primus intelligentiam condidit; nihilque divini Juris humanique ei incognitum videbatur: adeo ut etiam ſterilitatem agrorum ante multos annos providerit: periiſſetque omnis Ægyptus fame, niſi monitu ejus rex edicto ſervari per multos annos fruges juſſiſſet: tantaque experimenta ſapientiæ ejus fuerunt, ut non ab homine, ſed a Deo reſponſa dari viderentur.

Juſtin, lib. 36. 6. 2.

mer diſpenſations ſo fully handed down to us, may make a due improvement of it. We may (as it was intended by providence that the Egyptians ſhould) hence learn, that it is God alone who "changeth the times "and the ſeaſons: who turneth the floods "into a wilderneſs, and drieth up the water-"ſprings: a fruitful land maketh he bar-"ren for the wickedneſs of them that dwell "therein." Again "he maketh the wil-"derneſs a ſtanding water, and water-"ſprings of a dry ground.

"WHOSO is wiſe, will ponder theſe "things, and they ſhall underſtand the lov-"ing-kindneſs of the Lord."

DIS-

DISCOURSE XIII.

ECCLESIASTES ii. 2.

I ſaid of laughter, it is mad: and of mirth, what doth it?

STARTLE not, my younger brethren: my gay daughters, be not offended at the ſolemnity of the preacher, and at the forbidding aſpect of his text: his aim is not to damp, but to improve your joy; and agreeable to the dignity of his profeſſion, to make you happy rather than merry.

Of all the tempers which religion aſſumes; of all the dreſſes which this heavenly beauty puts on, there is none ſo diſcrediting and diſgraceful to her, as the ſevere gloom, the ſullen reſerve and moroſe manners which are often found in ſome of her moſt rigid profeſſors: they ſeem not to acknowledge, but reproach Providence, to have renounced the goodneſs, and to be ſtrangers to the mercy of God. Deſpairing ſinners without God or hope in the world, and ready to enter upon the eternal damnation of hell, could not well expreſs more dejection and miſery, than theſe unhappy ſouls, who would be thought ſole proprietors, and heirs elect of the joys and glories of heaven. Yet while we exclude melancholy from the courts of the Lord, we muſt not baniſh ſeriouſneſs from the ſervice of religion: we muſt rather call her in as a neceſſary companion, not only for the altar and cloſet, but of the common temper of our ſpirits, and of our ordinary converſation with mankind. When I have laid before you the

reaſons

reaſons and motives to this ſerious frame of mind, you will, I preſume, come to the ſame concluſion with the wiſe man in the text: "I ſaid of laughter, it is mad: and of "mirth, what doth it?"

YET before I proceed, let me not be miſtaken, or miſunderſtood; as if I would abſolutely forbid that happy ſerenity and chearfulneſs, which is the inſeparable attendant on true virtue and religion; or would pretend to reſtrain and extinguiſh, or even treat as ſinful thoſe joyous ebullitions of the ſpirit, and thoſe burſts of laughter, which are almoſt inſeparable from youth, innocence and health; and which ſome ridiculous objects and occaſions naturally and almoſt neceſſarily force from us, in ſpite of the maxims of wiſdom, and all the powers of gravity. All I mean to recommend to you, is ſuch a ſerious frame of ſpirit, ſuch a general habit of compoſedneſs and recollection, of ſobriety, of tempered and chaſte joy, as our preſent ſituation and circum-

ſtances, as men and chriſtians, ſeem to demand of us.

1. As men, we ſhould long ago have laid aſide and paſſed over ludicrous and childiſh things. There is a peculiar, a proper conduct and character due to, and becoming the ſeveral ages and periods of our life; the child may be playful, and youth lively and frolic; but from the man ſomething more and greater is required, dignity rather than gaiety; wiſdom and ſteadineſs more than levity; and mature deliberation and ſober attention to buſineſs, not the indulgence of fancy, and a wanton and libertine proſecution of the ſports of life. The ſmart, the lively youth we can bear with, while his temper does not corrupt his morals, and his levity degenerates not into libertiniſm; but the bearded boy, the man ſtill devoted to his childiſh trifles, his toys and his rattles, we behold with contempt at leaſt or pity, if not with indignation.

Our condition, our circumſtances, our ſituation in nature, are a ſtrong and perpetual call upon us to ſobriety of thought, to ſerioufneſs, to a ſedate and temperate conduct. Let our fortune be not only ſufficient, but abundant, and our place of defence very high; the uncertainty of all things here below, the attempts that will be made upon our character, though our lives ſhould be the moſt irreproachable, and the pains and complaints we are expoſed to in our perſon or frame, frail as it is, and perpetually liable to diſeaſe and death, ſhould methinks abate, if not extinguiſh the levity of the human mind, and give it that philoſophic caſt, which our own, and the conſtitution of nature ſeem to require.

The certainty and proſpect of Death in particular, conſidered only in the mere light of nature, ſhould carry that awe and ſolemnity, if not terror along with it, as to diſpoſe us, at leaſt to ſome degree of ſober thought, and ſerious reflection. For what

is death in its natural, its obvious and certain effects? A ſeparation from life and motion, from all our joys, our pleaſures and poſſeſſions; a divorce at once and for ever from all we once held dear and valuable in the world; a plunge into an abyſs unfathomable, and into a ſtate for any thing we know to the contrary, unchangeable and eternal. A bacchanal, or a madman may dance or ſing at the proſpect, and upon the brink of this awful precipice; but the apprehenſion of an object ſo certain in the event, ſo awful and momentous in its conſequences, as death preſent and death eternal, ſhould alarm all the ſenſibilities of our nature, and diſpoſe us to prepare with ſerioufneſs, with manly fortitude and philoſophic tranquillity, to meet the approach of this formidable enemy. The proſpect of our baniſhment from our native country, from our deareſt kindred, relations and friends, to ſome unknown region from whence there is no return, muſt naturally damp the ſpirits, and make the heart in the midſt

midſt of laughter, ſerious at leaſt, if not ſorrowful: and can we entertain the thought of our eternal ſeparation from the land of the living without concern, without ſober and ſerious reflection what may become of us for ever?

2. But man is not a ſolitary being, and concerned only for himſelf and his own intereſts, ſecurity and happineſs. As a ſocial being he is connected with relatives, neighbours, friends and country. If we are commanded to "rejoice with thoſe that do rejoice," we are likewiſe enjoined, as we find ourſelves by the very inſtinct of humanity diſpoſed, to "weep with thoſe that weep:" and in a world like ours, we find more frequent occaſion for ſorrow, than joy in the fortune and condition of our fellow-creatures. We can ſcarce caſt an eye abroad without meeting with ſome object of diſtreſs, poverty, pain, diſeaſe and death. The diſtreſſes of the poor are not more notorious, than the inſenſibility and extravagance, the

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immorality and impiety of the rich; and the view of neither can give room for complacency and joy in an honeſt and well-educated heart. We feel deeply for thoſe whom we are inclined to relieve: we feel ſtill more deeply for thoſe whom we are unable to relieve: and the ſcenes of miſery and diſtreſs are too many for any hand leſs than the Almighty to remedy or to remove.

In this ſtate of things, which we cannot but conſider as the conſtitution of God in nature, we are or ſhould be naturally led to an awful ſenſe of the Divine Providence. We ſee innocence ſometimes bleeding under the hand of an impious aſſaſſin; or doomed, as in the caſe of confeſſors and martyrs, to an unjuſt and painful execution: while triumphant wickedneſs bears its head aloft, makes a figure in public life, and tramples upon the laws both of God and man with impunity. If ſuch is the preſent ſtate of human nature; if we are, as we frequently are encompaſſed with inſtances of ſuffering innocence,

innocence, and proſperous and triumphant villainy, we ſhould, we muſt be ſeriouſly affected with ſuch appearances: they command a pauſe of thought and reflection in the midſt of the higheſt jollity, and might damp the moſt lively ſpirit with a ſuſpicion that the preſent life is no more than the infancy of being; and our ſtage, our tranſitory ſtage of trial, a ſingle act, or perhaps no more than the firſt ſcene of the drama of our immortal exiſtence. If this ſhould be our caſe, as the voice of all nature ſeems to ſpeak, ſomething more may be, muſt be expected from us in the conduct of life, than mirth and jollity. Duties will remain to be diſcharged in our ſeveral departments; and the offices we owe to our fellow-creatures, to our friends, to the community, to our country, will leave no room vacant for indulgence, for folly and frolic; eſpecially if we remember, and we cannot eaſily forget, that Jehovah, the Lord God of heaven and earth, is our Spectator, and will be our future Judge.

3. For

3. For in ſpite of all our diverſions and amuſements, which are called in to kill thought, and baniſh reflection, it is ſcarce poſſible for us not to regard ourſelves as rational and accountable beings; I mean, as creatures endued with reaſon, and intended for the practice of religion.

Reason is man's peculiar diſtinction and glory: it is that "which teacheth him more "than the beaſts of the field, and maketh him "wiſer than the fowls of heaven:" its range or object is univerſal nature; the natural, the moral and the ſpiritual world: its exerciſe and uſe is to diſtinguiſh truth from falſe appearances; to deduce effects from their proper cauſes, and juſt concluſions from their premiſes; to arrange and aſſort the ſeveral kinds of being under their proper heads; and to diſtinguiſh with preciſion and accuracy the various modes, or degrees that have place between mere poſſibility and actual certainty; between plauſible appearances and irrefragable truth. The excellency of reaſon

reaſon in its operations we may diſcern, in the deductions and diſcoveries of philoſophy; in the inſtitution and adminiſtration of civil policy; in the diſcourſe of ſages; in the wiſdom of ſenators and legiſlators; in the invention of arts and the government of kingdoms.

In this large field for the exerciſe of the rational ſoul and the diſplay of its faculties, there ſhould ſeem to be no room for ſport and play; for humour, wit and ridicule; which ſerve rather to miſlead than conduct the honeſt inquirer, and by holding out falſe lights and improper mediums, obſcure or diſguiſe the object which we are in ſearch of. Truth is awful and important, as reſulting from a conſtitution of things eſtabliſhed by the ſupreme, the all-wiſe, the all-holy and all-perfect God: Truth is ſometimes obſcure, or intricate, as comprehending and extending to a connection and relation of things, which lie beyond the ſphere of our preſent knowledge. Now reaſon is the

the faculty given us by the God of nature for diſſecting and inveſtigating truth; it ſhould therefore be ſerious, cool, deliberate and attentive. Wit is frolic, and laughter ludicrous, wanton, noiſy; both very improper judges, either to examine evidence, or to give ſentence in a cauſe, where truth is the ſubject in queſtion.

TRUTH and virtue are the nobleſt and moſt valuable acquiſitions of which the ſoul of man is capable: but they are both of a chaſte, an elevated, a ſevere and important nature; and require in their cultivation, a diligence and moral diſcipline not agreeable to, or conſiſtent with a levity of manners and diſſipation of thought: virtue and truth conſidered as the acquiſitions of no difficult attainment, as the reſult of no induſtry and application, of no ſeverity or moral diſcipline, could afford us little comfort in the reflection, and little confidence or hope of the favour and approbation of our Maker and our Judge. A life of frolic might become

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us, had we no reaſonable faculties to exerciſe, no virtues to acquire, no truths to explore or cultivate, and no duties to diſcharge: but life conſidered in the mere light of nature and philoſophy, as liable to error and ignorance, to vices and paſſions, to the aſſaults of enemies and the flattery of friends, to the temptations of pleaſure and the exigencies of labour and pain: ſuch a life as this, which is actually the caſe and life of man, ſhould ſeem to require vigilance, activity and care; accuracy at leaſt, if not ſeverity in our thoughts; and ſobriety, if not dignity in our conduct: but the frolic, the gay and the licentious are utter ſtrangers to theſe ſober virtues, and conſequently unacquainted with the proper duty they owe to themſelves, to mankind, and to the conſtitution of God in nature.

4. But the revelation which God has made of himſelf, his nature and attributes, of the relation we ſtand in to him, and to each other, and the proſpect he has opened

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to us of our immortal and eternal ſtate, ſupplies us with ſtill ſtronger motives to ſerioufneſs of thought, and ſobriety of conduct.

You find yourſelves ſurrounded on every ſide with the effects of his Attributes, of his Infinite Wiſdom, his Almighty Power, his Supreme Goodneſs and Mercy: you have in the proſpect of nature ſuch a greatneſs and magnificence, ſuch a majeſty and glory, ſuch a ſweep of Omnipotence in the range of heaven and earth, as might arreſt the moſt careleſs eye, and ſtrike the moſt licentious ſpirit with ſome degree of attention, of ſerioufneſs and wonder, if not with awe and devotion. You read in the annals of the generations that are paſt; you hear with your ears, and you ſee with your eyes frequent inſtances and interpoſitions of his awful and all-righteous Providence, in the awakening and dreadful judgments which have ſometimes overtaken the wicked, and in the deliverances wrought, and the mercies ſometimes vouchſafed to his faithful ſervants: you are every moment converſant in the

the preſence of God and his holy angels: your very ſoul, your heart, and all the thoughts of the heart are naked and open to his all-ſeeing eye. Your thoughts as well as your actions are naked in the book of his remembrance, to be produced at the laſt great day in the univerſal aſſembly of men and angels, to determine your eternal portion in the joys of heaven or the torments of hell.

In this view of your future and eternal exiſtence, the preſent life muſt appear to you what it really is, a momentary duration aſſigned, wherein to "work out your ſalvation "with fear and trembling." To attain this bleſſed end, you will think no virtues too ſevere to be practiſed, no ſufferings or mortifications too great or painful to be undergone: you will account "all things but "loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge "of Chriſt Jeſus," and of that "life and "immortality which he has brought to light "through the goſpel." The main contents of this goſpel are your fallen, ſinful ſtate by

nature, with your renovation by grace to holineſs and happineſs; to virtue, to glory, to immortality. Beſides this, the very means of mediation, and of your reconciliation to God by Jeſus Chriſt are of the moſt awful and divine import: the Meſſiah is foretold by prophets; his birth is announced from heaven by angels: the eternal Son of God leaves the boſom of his Father: the Son of God condeſcends to become man, to ſuffer the miſeries of mortality, and the death of an infamous malefactor. The truth of his goſpel is confirmed by the blood of apoſtles and martyrs, by the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and by the ruin of the Jewiſh ſtate and polity.

Behold the character and conduct of this Son of man, while converſant upon earth; pure and holy as God; and like God, diſtributing mercies and bleſſings to mankind. See him familiar, yet not vulgar; chearful without levity; humble and modeſt without affectation; dignity with

with humility, majeſty with candour, a meekneſs which no malice could provoke, a love which no injuries could conquer, a devotion and reſignation to God which no temptations or ſufferings could violate: ſuch are the ſtriking features which mark and diſtinguiſh the Son of God. But in all and through all you obſerve no vanity, no levity, no laughter, not one inſtance of that wanton mirth and joyous alacrity which are apt to tranſport the vulgar mind: but a ſerenity, a compoſure, a dignity, an elevation becoming Him who came from God, and went to God, and who was commiſſioned by Heaven to call men from the cares, the ſins and ſorrows, the paſſions and pleaſures of this world, to holineſs and happineſs, to honour, glory and immortality in the everlaſting kingdom of God.

SUCH, my brethren, was your Lord and Maſter Jeſus Chriſt: ſuch as you

have ſeen is the relation you ſtand in to the perfect and all-preſent God: ſuch as has been deſcribed is the life that now is; a ſtate of trial, the infancy of being, fitted to prove, to purify, and to prepare you for your future abode in God's eternal kingdom. And if upon this mortal ſtage, where the ſubject of the drama is life and death, eternal life and eternal death, with God for your Spectator and Judge, you can find room for diſſolute merriment, for frantic jollity, for bacchanalian revels, devils will laugh with you, and angels only weep in pity for your infatuation.

Not light and darkneſs, not Chriſt and Belial, not heaven and hell ſeem to differ more than a jovial and ludicrous ſpirit, and the ſpirit of the goſpel. But while you would avoid the character of the gay buffoon, beware that you degenerate not into the demure and affected phariſee, or into the gloomy and ſavage

ſavage bigot, who are not leſs a diſgrace to the cauſe of religion and the honour of God. The natural effect which the principles, the privileges and proſpects of chriſtianity have upon the ſincere and rational believer, is an affecting ſenſe of God's mercies and diſpenſations: and hence will follow elevation of ſentiment, dignity of conduct, complacency of manners, ſerenity, peace, joy, and a ſpirit above the ſpirit of the world. Starts of mirth and jollity are like a flaſh of lightning, or a momentary blaze, which amuſes rather than profits you, and conveys no uſeful light or heat. The joy reſulting from the principles of religion is deep and affecting; pure, ſerene and bright as that heaven to which it aſpires; ſteady, permanent and immutable, like that God who is its Author and End. The joy of the world may make you gay, the joy of religion will make you happy. The joy of the world may ſuit the na-

ture and temper of a fallen ſpirit: the joy of religion forms the diſpoſition, and conſtitutes the happineſs of an angel of light. The joy of the world tranſports for a moment, and is extinguiſhed for ever: the joy of religion ſpreads and improves more and more unto a perfect and eternal day. The joy of the world requires particular times, places, objects and occaſions to excite it; but the joy of religion is inſeparable from, and conſtant with you, as your own heart, your conſcious affections, the preſence, the perfections, the promiſes and mercies of God: from theſe no place, no time, no circumſtances or fortune can divide you: they lie down, they riſe up, they travel, they repoſe, they live with you, and deſert you not in death itſelf. The joy of the world is as a troubled, ſhallow, noiſy brook; the joy of religion is a ſtream deep, ſerene and clear, delightful to the taſte and ſweet to the ſoul; abundant and full, yet enlarging as it flows, and indefectible in its courſe, as deriving

deriving from a fountain infinite, and inexhauſtible. In one word, the joy of the world is the irregular flutter of a frail and mortal creature: but the joy of religion is rational, elevated and immortal; an efflux of Divine Mercy and Love, and an effect of Divine Power animating the heart of the martyr, ſoftening and ſweetning the pangs of death itſelf, overflowing the ſpirits, and attuning the ſongs of the angels of God.

DISCOURSE XIV.

LUKE xvi. 19, 20.

There was a certain rich man, which was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of ſores.

IN this parable of the rich man and Lazarus is exhibited the effect of two very different fortunes, and the juſtice of Providence in its various diſpenſations to the children of men.

THAT

THAT you may the better underſtand the momentous truths conveyed in this ſhort hiſtory, I ſhall endeavour to explain it more at large, and make ſuch obſervations on the ſeveral paſſages of it, as may tend to improve your hearts, as well as enlighten your underſtandings, and teach you to act with ſobriety and moderation, with juſtice, humanity and charity in what is called the beſt fortune; and with conſtancy and courage, reſignation and patience in the worſt.

1. THE firſt figure that preſents itſelf in the piece, is the rich man. He has the deference paid him that he perhaps once valued not a little, to be firſt taken notice of. "There was a certain rich man:" ſuch there are many; ſome eminent for their virtues, as others are infamous for their vices: this then is not enough to diſtinguiſh his character; he was not one of thoſe penurious wretches who delight in the name more than in the uſe of a fortune,

who

who are ſtill poor amidſt their plenty, and enjoy no more what they have, than what they want: but he did honour to his eſtate by his expence and ſplendour, and might poſſibly be eſteemed among his neighbours generous and noble: "He was cloathed in "purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptu- "ouſly every day." His houſe, his furniture, his attendants and equipage were probably in the ſame ſplendid and expenſive taſte.

And had his expences been ſuited to his fortune; had his motive to what is called good living, been gratitude to God the Giver, and beneficence to men his fellow-creatures: had he been pompous without pride, and liberal in his entertainments without luxury, at an equal diſtance from avarice and extravagance; his conduct had been leſs liable to cenſure; it had been of ſervice to ſociety, by encouraging arts and manufactures, and diſtributing the gifts of Providence among mankind.

But

BUT this was not his principle. Our Lord deſigned by the deſcription of his conduct to expoſe and condemn, not to approve and applaud the rich man; and to vindicate Providence in the partial diſtribution of what ſo little avails to our real happineſs and moral improvement.

THE rich man was well cloathed and well fed, ſo no doubt were the ſlaves by whom he was attended: ſo probably was the beaſt he rode on.

YOU ſee in this conduct of the rich man the utmoſt that riches can give, when applied to our own perſonal uſe: they ſeem a bleſſing to vulgar obſervers, and in ſome inſtances they are ſo; but generally they prove a curſe, a temptation to luxury and lewdneſs, to riot and exceſs, to pride and pomp. Could fortune give health or grace, vigour of body or peace of mind, its favours were to be coveted as the beſt gifts. Was virtue entailed upon a large eſtate, we might

might juſtly think ourſelves unhappy without one: we might complain that Providence was unkind and unequal: but when we conſider that outward ſplendor and domeſtic luxury, a feaſt for ſenſe, or a ſupply to vanity; that theſe are all that riches can give, we need not envy the poſſeſſor. For what is the mighty bleſſing to be the pageant of a day, and the gaze of a mob; or with high-flavoured luxury to indulge to ſenſe, and the gratifications of a brute? And what give riches more? Where God has given no heart to enjoy them, you may as well be poor: and where the rich man does enjoy after the example in the text, he is only curſed by his treaſures, and by his fortune undone. And how generally is this the effect of riches? View the man of fortune in high life, and how dreadful is his ſtate, wantonly ſquandering what might with proper management encourage the deſerving and ſupport the needy: above reproof, becauſe ſwelled with imaginary goods: inſolent from the dependence and

ſer-

ſervility of flatterers and inferiors: above law or goſpel, where he can by his power with impunity violate the one, and by his cunning evade the other.

2. In contraſt to this character, and as the ſecond actor in the parable, appears the poor man: "there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus." There are many forms of beggary, and all are thought or repreſented grievous enough; but this was intended to exhibit the utmoſt of miſery annexed to this character, as the rich man was to give us the beſt of his condition. It is ſaid of the beggar, that "he was laid at the rich "man's gate full of ſores, and deſiring to "be fed with the crumbs which fell from "the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs "came and licked his ſores."

Here you ſee a real picture of miſery, of what is called miſery, and almoſt the loweſt diſtreſs mortality can be reduced to, pain, hunger and diſeaſe. Had his body been

been found, and his health unimpaired, he might better have born hunger, or repelled it: or had plenty crowned his board, he had been leſs miſerable from his diſtempers, and found more comfort from divided ſorrows. But he was, or at leaſt muſt be thought completely wretched. He was not one of thoſe who bore about him the common forms of diſtreſs, a lawleſs vagabond, with diſſembled pains and fabled miſery, but one, on whom God had laid his afflicting hand, in ſtrokes viſible and undeniable.

HOWEVER, as riches, we ſaw, were not without their unhappy effects; ſo is not poverty without its advantages; it is not the fortune that makes the happy man; but the mind, the morals, the virtue and grace, which contribute more to form the true diſtinction between the great and little in this world, between the happy and unhappy, than wealth or titles.

THUS

THUS here though the Lazar had a diſtempered body, he had a free and virtuous ſoul: his mind was uninflamed with paſſions; his fleſh not pampered to wantonneſs or enjoyment; grace grew in this miſerable ſoil: virtue ſhines without "purple or fine linen." Lazarus was a ſaint and a hero, though in rags; and in conſequence of his piety had no doubt a peace paſſing all underſtanding of the rich epicure; his body, though full of ſores, was to him a field of glory: by it he learn'd to deny himſelf of good, and endure evil. The rich man was properly the Lazar, having a diſtempered ſoul and a wounded conſcience.

THE beggar wanted food, the rich man wanted virtue: the beggar had not health, the rich man had no grace. If the one had large poſſeſſions, he had alſo large demands; while the Lazar, if he had little, wanted little.

3. "HE

3. "He desired but the crumbs which "fell from the rich man's table. Such will be the desires of him who has heaven and immortality in view; a moderate supply to bring him on his short journey to his long home. The rich man will eat and drink, for to-morrow he dies, and extends not his prospect beyond the grave. The pious Lazar mortifies the body, that he may live for ever: he requires but crumbs at the present, that he may feast hereafter: his appetite is not "for the bread "which perisheth, but for that bread which "endureth unto everlasting life."

But modest as his requests were, it appears not that they found any compliance, or his wants any relief: he was poor, and therefore not worth notice. Had he been no object of Charity, and come attended with state and pomp, he had probably found an easy admittance: the rich man had sent or gone himself to the gate, to introduce his fashionable stranger, and

like Laban, when he ſaw the ear-ring and bracelets his ſiſter Rebekah had given her by Abraham's ſervant, would have ſaid, "Come "in, thou bleſſed of the Lord, wherefore "ſtandeſt thou without?"

But now he was otherwiſe engaged; laid on a bed of ivory, ſtretched upon his couch, and chanting to the ſound of the viol, he neither pitied nor relieved the miſery he did not feel: or the harp, or the tabret might drown the cries of the feeble lazar, and the wine raiſe his ſpirits above all regards to the works of the Lord, and the afflictions of his brethren. "Being in "no trouble as other men, neither plagued "like other men; pride compaſſed him "about as a chain, violence covered him as "a garment." His dogs poſſibly feaſted, while a ſon of Abraham lay diſeaſed, hungry and naked, unrelieved and unpitied at his gate. Are we ſhocked at ſo much inhumanity? yet ſhocking as it may ſeem, is it not ſtill practiſed? Does not the dog ſit at

at dinner with his lord, and feed on dainties, while the Lazar begs, but begs in vain for the crumbs which fall from the table? They that feel no wants of their own, consider not the wants of others; when they have enough, they think not of the time of hunger; and when they are rich, they think not upon the poor and needy. How does prosperity make us forget ourselves, that we are but clay, all thrown in one common mould, formed of the same earth, and to return to earth again?

4. This is the next thing represented in the parable: "It came to pass, that the "beggar died." It is but waiting awhile, my brethren, and "our redemption draweth "nigh:" the tempests of life may be violent, but not lasting; severe, but short; as the port is always in view, whenever it shall please the Pilot and Governor of nature to introduce us. And the prospect of a time when we shall be relieved, is some comfort to the greatest misery; and the more in-

tenſe the miſery, the more comfortable is the proſpect; the more raging the ſtorm, the more welcome is the refuge from it; ſo that Providence here begins to be juſtified.

Look we now back and behold all the calamities of life, buried in one common grave, ſwept away and conſigned to eternal ſilence! Not a pain now felt; not a groan heard, nor a ſigh uttered from the tomb. If ſome have thought death deſirable, even in the beſt fortune, as delivering the poſſeſſor from the poſſibility of chance and change, (though this is ſtraining the point too high) it muſt ſurely be a rational joy to be diſcharged from the worſt; from pain and poverty not merely poſſible, but actually preſent and deeply piercing. Exceedingly glad therefore muſt Lazarus needs be, when he found the grave. He had nothing but miſery to leave behind him. "The "clods of the valley were ſweet unto him. "He now lay ſtill, he ſlept and was at "reſt,

"reſt, with kings and counſellors of the "earth, who built deſolate places for them-"ſelves, and with princes that had gold, "who filled their houſes with ſilver."

THE moſt unequal characters in life find equal honours in the grave; are alike the common prey of worms, and no diſtinction appears in their duſt. The poor are at the ſame diſtance from oppreſſion and contempt, as the rich from flattery and friends: both are alike inſenſible of joy or ſorrow, of pleaſure and pain. Some plead privilege and claim exemptions in life; but all civil honours and diſtinctions are mingled in the grave; the lazar was now great as the greateſt, and rich as the richeſt, being reduced to that original duſt, from which princes high-born take their riſe, and into which they muſt return; from which honours give no ſecurity, nor riches any refuge or protection. For we read,

5. "THAT the rich man alſo died."

His pleaſures could not ſooth, his flatterers could not cajole, his riches could not bribe the inexorable tyrant: the gold of Ophir, the treaſure of a kingdom could not purchaſe his ranſom. He died, and with him all his pride and all his pomp: naked as he came from his mother's womb, naked he returns: or, if he has any thing remaining of his former poſſeſſions, it is his guilt and not his greatneſs. The one he muſt leave; the other he would, but cannot; both which are cauſes of great and inexpreſſible anguiſh at this awful moment.

1. He leaves his fortune, but 'tis with reluctance and regret, as being all that gave him diſtinction or importance in life; that gave him pleaſure, or gave him friends.

Had death found him lying on a bed of ſtraw, feeding on cruſts and crumbs, diſeaſed and naked, he had made death more welcome: but now his pain is more grievous from his former abundance in pleaſures; his

his joys more afflict him, becauſe they have been, and are now no more. The larger his fortune, the more unwillingly he quits it, and is moſt unhappy by his former means of happineſs.

LAZARUS quits the ſtage with joy; as he had nothing but rags and rottenneſs, poverty and pain, to leave behind him: to him death was no formidable monſter, no king of terrors, but a meſſenger of peace, an angel of light ſent down from above to ſtrike off his chains, and to conduct him to liberty and glory.

BUT death was a dreadful ſound to the rich man's ears. "When in his proſperity "the deſtroyer came upon him; his pur-"poſes were broken off, even the thoughts of "his heart, and the deſire of his eyes. His "day is changed into night, his light into "darkneſs: his harp is turned into mourn-"ing, and his organ into the voice of them "that weep." Though high fed and deli-

cately cloathed, he was but a more rich repaſt for corruption and the worms,

MISERABLE comforters are the beſt advantages in life when we come to die: in this ſerious hour when our lamp is expiring, but not quite expired; when it hangs quivering, appears by turns, and diſappears: when we have no more of life left than a conſciouſneſs that we cannot live: what mortal acquiſitions, be they titles, fame or fortune, can give relief or comfort? At this ſolemn moment, what could adminiſter to the rich man's eaſe or peace of all his former abundance? What now could his fortune do for him? Let all the delicacies of art, and beauties of nature be ſought out to amuſe, to ſupport and relieve him: prepare the reſtoring cordial; mix the ingredients, pour in oil and wine, the richeſt wines, Arabian odours, the rareſt products of ſea and land: let muſick lend her ſofteſt airs, flattery its choiceſt rhetoric; bring out the beſt robe, bow the knee before him! Alas! honours are now a mock-

a mockery, and ceremony but inſult: "his "life abhorreth bread, and his ſoul dainty "meat." "He who had waſhed his ſteps in "butter, and the rock had poured him out "rivers of oil," now pines a taſteleſs wretch: his body is dying; his appetite is already dead: his ſoul is now his all; a principle he had not conſidered before, and for which he has now no cordial.

THUS deprived of all that once amuſed or pleaſed, that fed his vanity or gratified his paſſions, he is reduced to his mere perſonal qualities and accompliſhments, which had before been no part of his care. He is now a naked ſoul, and not only naked but ſtarved; unadorned with virtue, unendued with grace, he dies without comfort or credit, with ſcarce the tribute of a tear from falſe friends, and time-ſerving ſycophants.

6. DECENCY however muſt be preſerved, and ſolemnity attend (as it often does) the

the infamous remains of our ſinner of quality and diſtinction. "He was buried:" Magnificence affects the air of mourning, and faſhion paſſes upon the world for real woe. He was buried with the pomp of grief, with the trappings of ſorrow. His rich friends are for the laſt time entertained at his table; while the poor once more ſtarve at his gate. He was conveyed to his grave with form and ſtate: a face of ſeriouſneſs, and an air of real grandeur are aſſumed at his death, which had never appeared in his life: the marble tomb and coſtly monument continue the compliment paid to greatneſs, while true wiſdom only mourns to ſee this inſult upon common ſenſe; and ſmiles or rather grieves to ſee death a matter of ceremony, and pride attending man to duſt, and guilt complimented to the gates of hell. For,

7. THERE it is we next hear of the great rich man: "in hell he lift up his "eyes;" now, perhaps the firſt time opened

ed to a future ſtate. He had before been, as appears from his requeſt to Abraham, an unbeliever; and poſſibly paſſed for a wit in his days; a man of free thought, ſuperiour to bigotry and ſuperſtition, and an enemy to prejudice and prieſtcraft; and who had made prophets and patriarchs the ſubject of his ridicule. Good fortune, as it is called, contributes not a little to this turn of thought: men's vices, the conſequences of their plenty, generally diſpoſe them to reconcile their belief with their practice; to ſoften the malignity of their crimes, to oppoſe the dignity of that teacher, whoſe moral they renounce; to mock at a future judgment, becauſe they cannot ſtand it, and to deny a hell becauſe they deſerve it. I remember not to have met with one argument in any one author, either againſt the exiſtence of heaven, or its eternity: heaven is no place of puniſhment for ſin; no object of terror, or ſtate of dreadful retribution. And had hell been as indifferent a point,

point, it had met with as eaſy a digeſtion, and no more oppoſition.

BESIDES his other vices, inclining him, a peculiar vanity often attends the great rich man, to be diſtinguiſhed by his opinions, as much as by his fortune, and to ſtand aloof from the vulgar, if it is but by his ſingularity in folly and impiety. But let him live a fool and die a madman, in "hell "he muſt lift up his eyes:" here the rich man firſt looked up and ſaw himſelf undone.

"'TWIXT upper, nether, and ſurrounding "fires:" he is cut to the heart, and crieth out for anguiſh of ſpirit and cruel torment.

HE who before had indulged to every appetite, ſought after every rarer delicacy, had filled himſelf with coſtly wine and ointment, and let no flower of the ſpring paſs by him, now "drinks of the wine of the "wrath of God, which is poured out "without mixture, into the cup of his in-"dignation;

" dignation; and he is tormented with fire " and brimſtone, in the preſence of the holy " angels, and in the preſence of the lamb; " and the ſmoke of his torment aſcendeth " up for ever and ever; and he has no reſt " day nor night."

DREADFUL ſituation! to be cut off from hope as well as enjoyment! miſerable change! from luxury, from eaſe and pleaſure, to pain, to torment and ſorrow! And what ſtill aggravates his miſery is, that it borders on the regions of happineſs: hell is ſtill more dreadful by its ſituation within ſight of heaven; pain more painful, and grief more grievous, by the pleaſure and joy which he ſees to be the happy portion of others, but which muſt never be his happy portion: " He ſeeth Abraham," but it is " afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom,"

SHAME and confuſion might have covered his face, to find his infidelity thus dreadfully confuted; to ſee that Abraham whom he

he had before renounced, and that Lazarus to whom he had ſo lately denied the crumbs from his table: but the intenſeneſs of his pain made him break through all decorum. "And he cried, and ſaid, Father "Abraham, have mercy on me, and ſend "Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his "finger in water, and cool my tongue; "for I am tormented in this flame."

How righteous are all the ways of God, and how juſt his judgments? The rich man had been extravagant and wicked in his enjoyments; he now pines under want, and is impatient in his ſufferings. He had before renounced his privileges as a child of Abraham; he is now obliged to addreſs the father of the faithful: he who had once fared ſumptuouſly every day, and waſhed his garments in wine, is now ready to die for thirſt: he who had flowed in plenty, now wants a drop of water. He begs relief from that Lazarus, to whom he had denied it; he had ſent others, and is therefore himſelf

himſelf ſent empty away: for "Abraham "ſaid, ſon, remember that thou in thy "life-time receiveſt thy good things, and "likewiſe Lazarus evil things; but now he "is comforted, and thou art tormented." Happy and awful truth, intended for the inſtruction of all future ages, to confirm our faith, and to eſtabliſh our truſt in Providence till the conſummation of all things.

We hence learn, "that the triumphing of "the wicked is ſhort, and his joys are but for "a moment. Though his excellency mount "up to the heavens, and his head reach "unto the clouds, yet his end ſhall be, that "he periſh for ever. The eye which ſaw "him, ſhall ſee him no more, neither ſhall "his place any more behold him. All "darkneſs ſhall be hid in his ſecret place; "a fire not blown ſhall conſume him." Poor are thoſe pleaſures, and wretched thoſe enjoyments which draw after them eternal pain. Riches are not worth our envy

vy or appetite, which frequently ſink the poſſeſſors into hell.

Be finery, faſhion and feaſting the lot of the unjuſt and immoral; "yet envy thou not "the oppreſſor, and chooſe none of his ways." "Remember his end, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs." "In hell he lifts up his eyes:" may theſe words ſink deep into our ſouls, pierce the conſcience, and wound ſo they may but heal our guilty boſoms. May we, who have the example of this undone ſinner, lift up our eyes before we are in torments: may we "in this our day regard the "things that belong unto our peace before "they are hid from our eyes;" now is the time to ſeek our Redeemer "while he may "be found, and before our feet ſtumble upon "the dark mountains:" after death our labour will be loſt, and our repentance vain. God in mercy now warns us to ſorrow for our ſins, that we may not lament them for ever. Hell is mercy to the living, though the abode of deſpair and eternal death to him who

who dies in his tranſgreſſions. Had God's deſire been to deſtroy and puniſh, rather than to ſave and reclaim the ſinner, he had not foretold the miſerable fate that awaits him. The rich man is by his puniſhment a preacher of righteouſneſs, as he had before by his example been a corrupter of mankind. Day and night from the bottom of perdition he ſtill cries out to his ſurviving brethren, and warns us "not to come into that "place of torment."

LASTLY; We hence alſo learn that as the pleaſures of ſin are but for a moment, and vaſtly over-balanced by the weight of miſery that ſucceeds them; ſo are the ſufferings of the righteous "not worthy to be "compared with the glory which ſhall be re-"vealed." Are we, like Lazarus, afflicted and ſore ſmitten, and at once oppreſſed with poverty and pain? No matter, ſo be we reign with Lazarus. If our affections are on things above, we ſhall not be over-anxious what our fortune is below: if we

keep a ſtedfaſt eye on heaven, we ſhall be leſs concerned for our portion on earth. No one was ever miſerable who ſtedfaſtly believed in that "life and immortality which "Jeſus Chriſt brought to light through the "goſpel." By grace we are children of God, and heirs of eternity. If we are corrected, it is in mercy, that we may be ſaved in the great day of the Lord Jeſus: if we have ſorrow for a time, it is that we may rejoice for ever: if night and darkneſs cloud our preſent proſpect, it is only to point our views more ſtrongly to the regions of eternal day. Let our troubles be great, our comforts are more abundant: as Lazarus is a pattern of patience to us, ſo is he an example of that glory that ſhall be revealed in us: ſee him now the ſcorn of men, and a companion for dogs, periſhing with diſeaſe and hunger: wait but a while, and you ſee him "carried by the bleſſed angels into "Abraham's boſom:" man rejected him, but God received him: he found the rich man's gate ſhut againſt him, but the kingdom

dom of heaven was open: he wanted even rags to cover his ſores, and deſired but crumbs to ſatisfy his hunger: he now is cloathed with white robes, and puts on a body glorious and immortal: "he hungers no "more, neither thirſts any more:" "the "Lamb of God feeds him, and leads him "unto living fountains of water." Great and bleſſed change! From want and nakedneſs, to angel's food and robes of glory; from ulcers and pains, to immortal health and heavenly beauty; from the pride of men, to the ſociety of angels; from the ſcorn of men, to the favour of God. Happy change, and glorious recompence for the poor and imperfect ſervices of his creatures! to be tranſlated from darkneſs to God's marvellous light, from earth to heaven, from meanneſs and miſery to triumph and glory.

WELCOME then poverty, welcome pain, welcome darkneſs, welcome death itſelf, our kind conductor to immortal life and

light, to "pleaſures that never fade, and "riches that wax not old, eternal in the "heavens." Welcome every croſs that helps to exalt us with our exalted Lord, to the everlaſting kingdom of his Father and our Father, of his God and our God.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XV.

PSALM cxi. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom: a good underſtanding have all they that do thereafter; the praiſe of it endureth for ever.

"THOU haſt a devil and art mad: "He is beſides himſelf," was the language held out on the conduct and character of Him, "who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth." The followers of the bleſſed and holy Jeſus

have not found more candid treatment from the world, than their Maſter: and the man diſtinguiſhed for his faith and virtue, for his conſcientious regard to the profeſſion and practice of true religion, and for his zeal to promote the glory of God, you have repreſented to you under the character of a bigot, a fanatic or enthuſiaſt: and whatever good meaning, ſincerity or virtue may be allowed to his heart, his mental capacity, or the faculties of his head are ſure to be called in queſtion.

To expoſe this common cant, this vile and vulgar ſarcaſm thrown upon true religion, and its ſincereſt friends:

I. Let us briefly take a view of thoſe foundations or ſpeculative principles, on which the religious man builds his practice: And,

II. Let us examine the practice of religion itſelf, or the nature of thoſe graces and

and virtues which it requires from, and enjoins upon its votaries and ſincere diſciples. Whence we may clearly collect, whether ſuch practice, and ſuch principles can juſtly ſubject thoſe who adopt them to the character of fools and imputation of folly, or entitle them to the praiſe of the ſublimeſt and moſt ſubſtantial wiſdom.

1. We ſee a magnificent world around us, filled with life and motion: we ſee not only magnificence, but ſymmetry and order in the works of nature; "the ſun to rule "by day, the moon and ſtars to rule by "night." We experience a regular ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, fitted both to our wants and our pleaſures; and in the whole proceſs of the lower world, means fitted to ends, and the whole creation labouring as it were together for the uſe, the ſupport and delight of its inhabitants. Objections have indeed been made to ſome appearances in the natural world; but what appeared at firſt ſight a blemiſh, has upon the ſtricteſt exa-

mination proved a beauty; and no leſs wiſdom and goodneſs, than power has been ſhewn to exiſt in the parts, and in the whole of the conſtitution of nature.

Now who, we aſk, is the wiſe man upon this occaſion; he who aſcribes this world of life and motion, this arrangement of ſun and ſtars, this regular ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, this uſe, beauty and ſymmetry, this power, wiſdom and goodneſs, viſible in all the works of nature, to a ſupreme Creator and Governor; or, he who adopts neceſſity, chance, atoms and nothing as the Father of the whole?

Again, if we look into the moral world, and examine its hiſtory from the commencement of time; we find in general a connexion between virtue and happineſs, between the diſcharge of duty, and the bleſſing that attends it. Looking into the lives of private perſons, we ſhall find dangers

gers averted from the helpleſs, bleſſings beſtowed upon the indigent, the innocent delivered, and the villain frequently overtaken; the hungry filled, and the rich ſent empty away: we ſhall find ſpecial mercies vouchſafed, and ſignal judgments inflicted, and a hand more than mortal viſibly interpoſing in the conduct of human life. In the hiſtory of nations, this moral diſcrimination is ſtill more manifeſt, as the object is larger, and more eaſily attracts our notice; here we ſee generally kingdoms and people great and happy in proportion to their moral character and conduct; their probity, activity and proweſs; their temperance; their abſtinence; their ſimplicity of manners and devotion towards heaven. As with the ill manners, the avarice, the ambition and luxury, we ſee the diſaſters and misfortunes of a ſtate commence; a decline of empire attending the decline of virtue, and both generally expiring together. Such a moral diſtribution in the hiſtory and conduct of mankind, ſhould ſeem

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to ſpeak to the ears of wiſe men, a juſt, a righteous and holy Providence: and ignorance and folly alone, would aſcribe moral attributes and diſpenſations to fate, and chance, and atoms.

I ATTEMPT not to go through the proofs of revealed religion, and to ſhew on what divine grounds the believer adopts the articles of his faith; I ſhall only on this occaſion beg leave to ſuggeſt a few conſiderations, in order to vindicate the chriſtian believer from the charge of folly or ignorance.

JESUS CHRIST, of a family at that time private and obſcure, the Son of the carpenter Joſeph according to the fleſh, makes his appearance in an enlightened age, and in a nation eminent for the knowledge of religion; unformed as he is by education, and unacquainted with arts, he ſhews himſelf "mighty in deed and word;" he exceeds, he controuls the courſe of nature; he cures

cures the blind and the lame; he heals the ſick, he cleanſes the lepers by a word ſpeaking, without any art or medical application. He commands the troubled ſea into a calm; he raiſes the dead, he raiſes himſelf from the dead, and aſcends viſibly into heaven. His works in general were not only a diſplay of ſuperiour power, fitted to ſtrike terror and raiſe amazement, but ſuch as tended to remove the miſeries, and promote the intereſts and happineſs of mankind.

UNTUTORED as he was in ſcience, and a ſtranger to the ſchools of rabbies and philoſophers, he gave to the world, during his miſſion, ſuch leſſons of morality and religion; precepts of piety ſo ſolid and ſincere, ſo ſublime and ſpiritual, as no mere man had before ever publiſhed, and ſuch as we ſhall in vain attempt to find in the ſchools of Egypt, of Greece or Rome. His doctrine was publiſhed and preached by himſelf, and his followers, fiſhermen of Galilee, without the aids of art, or the ornament

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and recommendation of elocution; unſupported by the countenance of the civil powers, and in oppoſition to the united force of the wit, the learning, the eloquence and authority of the world, employed by its adverſaries to ſtop its growth, and extinguiſh its name and being from the face of the earth; yet this notwithſtanding, this grain of muſtard-ſeed took root, grew, ſpread itſelf far and wide, and filled the earth with its branches.

Now, to what ſhall we aſcribe this wiſdom and theſe mighty works? Reaſon and common ſenſe will eaſily apprehend, and readily acknowledge the finger of God to have been the principal agent in the firſt promulgation and ſucceeding propagation of this amazing diſpenſation: and it muſt be folly and ignorance of the worſt kind, that of the heart, or of the head infected by the heart, that would aſſign artifice and ambition, or enthuſiaſm, or the devil and his angels, as the miniſters, the agents and authors

authors of ſuch beneficent miracles, and ſo rational and ſpiritual a diſpenſation. True wiſdom will proportion means to ends, and aſſign equal cauſes to apparent effects. But does it deſerve the name of this wiſdom, to ſuppoſe that the carpenter's Son of Nazareth, and the fiſhermen of Galilee, by the aſſiſtance of their natural powers, and without the aids of art and erudition, were ſufficiently qualified to confute the learning, to ſilence the eloquence, to withſtand the powers and principalities, and to overturn the long-eſtabliſhed faith of both Jew and Gentile, and to over-rule the religious principles of the world? Or, will true wiſdom ſay, that ambition fired the breaſts of Jeſus and his diſciples, to make this attempt of univerſal conqueſt and empire over the minds and opinions of mankind, an attempt of which they had not ſeen, or heard any inſtance or example in the hiſtory of the world? Or, will wiſdom pretend, and it was the principal pretence that the firſt enemies of chriſtianity had, to oppoſe to its truth

truth and divine authority, that the devil, a principle equally malicious and wicked, could be an agent in this beneficent diſpenſation, in working miracles which removed the maladies of mankind, and at the ſame time eſtabliſhed and confirmed doctrines fitted to promote the glory of God, peace on earth, and good will among men?

If enthuſiaſm is aſſigned as the motive and efficient cauſe of the conduct of Chriſt; reaſon will demand; Could enthuſiaſm work miracles, heal the living, or raiſe the dead? Could enthuſiaſm fulfil prophecies, publiſhed ſome hundred years before? Or, could enthuſiaſm foretel events of a ſingular and amazing nature; ſuch as the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, the captivity and diſperſion of the Jews, with the ſucceſsful propagation of chriſtianity, by inſtruments the leaſt fitted by nature, and in the views of human prudence altogether unqualified for ſuch an attempt? Enthuſiaſm could

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no more do this, than ambition, another motive aſſigned to Chriſt's conduct, could renounce the riches, the honours, the reputation and eſteem of this world, for the ſake of poverty, perſecution, calumny, and a painful and ignominious death.

To conclude; Let reaſon ſummon up all the objections that have been made, and apply the ſevereſt examination to the principles of natural and revealed religion; and ſhe will, upon a full and fair enquiry, find theſe principles firm and irrefragable, as the foundation of heaven and earth, and the power of God and the wiſdom of God manifeſt through the whole. Nay, I will venture to affirm, that the ſtrongeſt objections to chriſtianity will, upon the iſſue of a fair and full examination, give new ſtrength to the evidence, and new luſtre to the doctrines of the goſpel: and I preſume that unbeliever is yet to ſeek, who may not be ſhewn to have departed from the principles of common ſenſe, in proportion as he

he hath departed from the articles of his faith. Men may diſplay, and have diſplayed wit and genius enough in their oppoſition to the goſpel: but they have at the ſame time diſcovered their want of true judgment and a ſound underſtanding.

To ſet the character and Divine Miſſion of Jeſus in a fuller light, let the reader only recollect and compare with it the conduct of a mere human legiſlator, and then ſay, if they bear any likeneſs to each other.

LYCURGUS was the brother of a king, and had no doubt a royal education, and a ſpirit not unworthy of his birth: when offended with the diſorders of his country, he conceived the deſign of reforming and altering the laws and manners of Sparta, he employed all the proper, and all the poſſible means, we may ſay, of acquiring ſufficient knowledge to qualify him for his great attempt: for this purpoſe he travelled into Crete, Egypt and Aſia, to acquaint himſelf

himſelf with the laws, the inſtitutions and policy of other ſtates, moſt eminent for their wiſdom and virtue: having from theſe formed his plan, in order to carry it into execution, he gained over the principal and leading men of the city, to favour and join with him in his attempt; and yet after all, to get his laws enacted, he was obliged to enter the Forum with an armed force. In this, and in the whole of his conduct, the legiſlator plainly acted like one, who depended on policy and power for the ſucceſs of his enterprize; who contented not himſelf with the bare publication of his laws, and left their eſtabliſhment and duration to the interpoſition of heaven; as their origin, their contents and compoſition were evidently not of God, but of man; and no one, I preſume, will defend the heavenly miſſion, or divine legation of Lycurgus.

DISCOURSE XVI.

PSALM cxi. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom: a good underſtanding have all they that do thereafter; the praiſe of it endureth for ever.

THE firſt principles, foundations and proofs of religion, both natural and revealed, we preſume, approve themſelves to the unprejudiced reaſon of every compe-

tent and ſerious enquirer; and it is worth obſerving, that men the moſt eminent for learning, for largeneſs of thought, for accuracy of reaſoning, and comprehenſive knowledge, both of our own, and other nations, though differing perhaps in underſtanding or explaining particular paſſages or articles of faith, have agreed in accepting, in embracing, and many of them in defending the credentials, and Divine Authority of the common ſalvation. But we need not reſt the cauſe of religion in general, and of chriſtianity in particular, on the ſpeculative opinions, or learned arguments produced to prove its Divine Origin and authority; the goodneſs and wiſdom of God in giving, and the wiſdom of man in accepting the light and direction of heavenly truth, will perhaps more clearly and eaſily appear by conſidering the contents and practical principles of that truth, the duties it enjoins, the promiſes it makes, the hopes it holds out to us, the ſupport and comfort it yields us in life and in death, and the miſchief

miſchief and miſery to which we expoſe ourſelves by denying or renouncing it.

As citizens or members of ſociety, and as individuals, we muſt, as we would be true to the genuine inſtincts and dictates of nature, or claim any title to the character of wiſdom, be averſe to miſery, and deſirous to be happy. As a citizen, would you baniſh religion from ſociety? Blot out the ſun and ſtars! You would do leſs miſchief to mankind. Cancel the ſacred laws of heaven; diſſolve the obligations of conſcience, and leave every man to do what is right in his own eyes; and you let mankind looſe, like beaſts of prey, on the wild and boundleſs common of nature, to ſpoil, to devour or deceive each other, according to their abilities in fraud or force. What ſecurity have you for your peace, your property, your perſon or your life, or what you may hold as dear as life, your character and good name, while you are joined in ſociety, if any ſociety could be maintained,

with ſuch who "have no fear of God before "their eyes;" and who conſequently from a principle of ſelf-love (the only principle that can be ſuppoſed to bind them) can have no regard to right or wrong, to truth or falſhood, but as they may thereby beſt ſerve their own intereſts, gratify their own paſſions, and promote their own deſigns? What confidence can you have in the protection of the laws, and the integrity of the judge, in the friendſhip, kind offices or good faith of your country-men and neighbours, or in the fidelity of your ſervants and domeſtics; or, what inſtance of duty can you expect from any man, whom you diſcharge from his duty to God?

You will not expect that a ſenſe of honour ſhould operate among the loweſt of the people, from whoſe minds you have eraſed the obligations of conſcience; and if we look into the higher orders and ranks of life, we obſerve thoſe among them, who have thrown off the reſtraints of religion, not

not diſtinguiſhed either for their private or public virtues; for their temperance and chaſtity, their beneficence and humanity; their domeſtic œconomy or conjugal fidelity; for ſincerity to their friends, zeal to their country or benevolence to mankind. Or, do we not generally find the ſame men who are moſt impious in their principles, moſt licentious in their practice? And why ſhould we wonder, that the man, who has renounced or denies his God, ſhould injure his wife, betray his friend, oppreſs or defraud his neighbour, or ſell his country? What reſtraint or government can he be expected to lay upon his body, who has perſuaded himſelf that he has no ſoul? Or, what fear can he be ſuppoſed to entertain of man, who has caſt off the terrors of the Almighty?

Some refiners in the minute philoſophy have inſinuated, that our faith in, and an attachment to the bleſſedneſs and happineſs of the future world, muſt in proportion

increaſe our love and fondneſs for the preſent. An inſinuation too abſurd and ridiculous to deſerve a confutation! but reaſon and common ſenſe will certainly juſtify us in this concluſion; that they who have given up all proſpect of futurity, muſt in prudence, and upon the principle of ſelf-love, make the moſt they can of this world; and that the man who conſiders this life as his all and the whole of his exiſtence, will certainly croud it with as much happineſs, and as many benefits and pleaſures as he can make himſelf maſter of. Other men's pretenſions or property are nothing to him; and he will without ſcruple, invade and trample upon both in contempt of law as well as goſpel, when he can do it with impunity. The laws may in many caſes be evaded by cunning, or over-powered by force; and no private man, nor has the public itſelf any ſufficient ſecurity againſt the attempts of an artful, or a bold and powerful unbeliever.

SHOULD you aſſign honour as a ſufficient principle to influence the morals and conduct of mankind; we aſk, what is honour, but a reſpect to the preſent mode of thinking, or the common opinion and eſteem of mankind? Let vice or virtue be in faſhion; honour, which only reſpects the eye and approbation of the public, which adopts this faſhion, muſt indifferently embrace either virtue or vice. Let us ſuppoſe the times ſo degenerate, that infidelity ſhould be eſteemed a modiſh accompliſhment, and a neceſſary ingredient in polite converſation; honour would be ſo far from influencing to good purpoſe, that it muſt corrupt the manners of the age. Again, ſuppoſe faſhion ſhould authoriſe a man to murder, or attempt to murder his friend for a real or imaginary affront, or for an unwary or unguarded expreſſion, the character of diſhonour muſt be ſtamped on him, who has the patience to rectify a miſtake, or the candor and generoſity to forgive an injury. Again, ſuppoſe the faſhion in our political

political region was to be ſervile in place, or to be turbulent and factious out of place, honour in the firſt caſe muſt lead you to betray the intereſts, and in the other to perplex the councils of your country.

But ſuppoſing that virtue, genuine ſterling virtue, had the only currency in the community, the only ſtamp of public authority and approbation; yet there are and will be many occaſions and opportunities, in which an unbeliever, who is diſcharged in his own account from all obligations to God, may impoſe upon or eſcape the notice of man; and he is upon all ſuch occaſions obliged upon his own principles to act the hypocrite or the villain. Honour, or the appearance of honour, in the public eye muſt anſwer the ſame end; and whenever or wherever intereſt ſhould be on the ſide of the ſhadow, an unbeliever muſt renounce the ſubſtance; for to a man, who is only concerned for this world, honour or diſhonour muſt be equally agreeable or indifferent:

different; and if diſhonour would ſerve his turn the better, he muſt eſteem it as the better bargain. For good and evil, I mean moral good and evil having, according to him, no foundation in the conſtitution of nature and the will of God, can lay him under no obligation to prefer the one before the other; and having given up all proſpect of futurity, his greateſt good muſt be his beſt preſent intereſt.

To ſupply theſe defects of honour, ſome have ſubſtituted a taſte, or a moral ſenſe in the room of religion; but if by theſe terms they mean any thing beſides, or different from the dictates of a conſcience informed, influenced and ſupported by the laws and authority of God, their views are chimerical, and their moral diſcipline for the government of mankind no ſtronger than a ſpider's web. Not one in a thouſand among the vulgar, would be brought to underſtand the terms made uſe of to eſtabliſh this new philoſophy; and of thoſe who did under-

underſtand it, not one in a thouſand would be influenced by it. Command the raging ſea into a calm by a lover's lute; and then may you hope to reſtrain the paſſions of mankind by taſte and the moral ſenſe. I know what I ſay, and the language, the ſentiments and the reaſoning made uſe of on this ſubject. An ingenious naturaliſt might ariſe with a noſtrum, or ſubſtitute, to ſupply the place of the ordinary proviſions which God has ordained for mankind; he might perhaps aſſert, and give very ſpecious and pregnant reaſons to prove, that men might feed on air, and feaſt on a metaphyſical ſpeculation; and though few might apprehend his reaſoning, and fewer ſtill be tempted to make trial of his phyſical regimen, yet it would, I dare affirm, contribute as much to ſupport the health and vigour of the conſtitution, as your moral diſcipline would to mend the manners of mankind.

Of all the whimſical projects that ever entered

entered into the human brain, there never was a wilder, (not that of making wings to fly into the moon excepted) than this of making all orders of men among us, men of taſte and ſentiment; which, beſides other bad conſequences it muſt have upon the civil world, could it be brought to take effect, would be peculiarly pernicious to virtue and morality; for no man having a proper or juſt authority to eſtabliſh a ſyſtem of faith, all men would think themſelves at liberty to adopt what they liked beſt, that of their own or other men's. Natural paſſion might not only corrupt, but uſurp the ſtile of the moral ſenſe; and the groſſer paſſions might in time, as the politer arts have already done, appropriate to themſelves the name of virtù; at beſt, no one having any power to direct, every one would find himſelf at liberty to follow his own paſſions and devices for the regulation of his taſte and the conduct of his life.

But religion, or the fear of God is a very

ry different principle of virtue, and recommends itſelf as the trueſt and moſt ſubſtantial wiſdom, to the protection and encouragement of every ſtate or community; it contains a rule, or a ſyſtem of truths, clear and explicit, plain and obvious to the meaneſt capacity; reſpecting the duties we owe to God, and to each other; it requires no ſingular depth of underſtanding, no refinement of taſte, or tedious deduction, or laboured ſtudy to comprehend it; like God's beſt bleſſings of nature, it offers itſelf as it were to the common obſervation, and eaſy cultivation of every Son of Adam. He who runs may read it, and you will find even the vulgar and unlettered not ſo much lamenting their ignorance, as betraying their negligence, their ſlothfulneſs and inattention to the means of grace, and accuſing themſelves for the violation of their known duty.

AGAIN, religion is impoſed and enforced by an authority almighty and irreſiſtible; it equally

equally affects and takes hold of the maſter and the ſlave, the prince and the ſubject, him who ſitteth on the throne, and him who grindeth at the mill. The wiſeſt cannot eſcape the notice of him who is perfect in knowledge; nor the moſt powerful reſiſt, or oppoſe with effect, the terrors and judgments of him, who is Almighty to ſave or to deſtroy. The ſanctions of religion are ſuch as affect us in our neareſt and deareſt intereſts; in the happineſs "of the life that "now is, and of that which is to come." The welfare of body and ſoul, in time and through eternity depend on the obſervance or violation of the righteous laws of heaven. It is poſſible to corrupt or impoſe upon both judge and jury, to ſuborn falſe witneſſes, and to eſcape the penalties and puniſhments of human laws; but corruption, impoſition and falſhood will be found vain, or only ſerve to enhance your guilt, and aggravate your condemnation, when you ſtand before the tribunal of the judge of heaven and earth.

And with reſpect to the welfare or public happineſs of a ſtate, religion is the only baſis of its ſecurity and duration: the ſtrength of a ſtate is the virtue of a ſtate: and ſolid, ſubſtantial virtue can be ſupported by nothing but the ſanctions and influence of religion. Whenever there appears a general corruption in the body of a people; when kings command and ſubjects obey, when miniſters counſel and ſoldiers fight, when judges preſide over the laws, and jurors bear teſtimony, without any regard to the principles of conſcience, and the fear of the Lord, it is eaſy to ſee that a ſtate thus adminiſtred, is without any ſolid ſupport within or without; and that thus diſtempered in all its members, it muſt gradually waſte away, or fall a ſacrifice to the firſt acute diſorder that attacks it. And we want not other examples, beſides that of the Roman ſtate, to ſhew us, that the neglect of the Gods, as they ſtiled it, is attended with every enfeebling vice, and every degeneracy in moral practice; and the

Divine

Divine Providence ſeems to diſplay itſelf, as on the moſt public ſtage, in the decline, the fall and overthrow of ſtates and kingdoms, who have renounced that firſt principle of wiſdom, "the Fear of the Lord."

By "the fear of the Lord" I mean religion and its pure and genuine principles, which are the life, the health and vigour of a ſtate, as exacting a conſcientious diſcharge of duty from every member of the community: they ſpur on the languid, they animate the coward, they reſtrain the licentious, they alarm the careleſs, they awe the powerful, they ſubdue the mighty, they check the preſumptuous, they repreſs the ambitious, they deter the rebellious, they confront the villain, and arreſt the poignard from the hands of the aſſaſſin: with more than magic power of a golden chain let down from heaven, they confine every member of ſociety to order, and the diſcharge of his proper duty; operating in this, like the laws of nature, by

which the planets are confined to their ſeveral orbits, and at the ſame time compoſe the harmony, and mutually adminiſter light, and contribute to the order and beauty of the univerſal ſyſtem.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XVII.

PSALM CXI. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom: a good underſtanding have all they that do thereafter; the praiſe of it endureth for ever.

IF religion, as has been generally admitted, is neceſſary to the ſupport of ſociety, and beneficial to ſtates and communities, as enforcing the duty of the members upon the obligations of conſcience, it is a preſumption of its utility to individuals, or to mankind in general, in their private and

perſonal capacity. But we need not preſume, or beg the queſtion on the preſent ſubject: it is eaſy, and it may be of uſe to be particular, full and explicit in our defence and recommendation of religion; and in ſhewing, as I propoſe at this time, that "the fear of the Lord" is the trueſt wiſdom, which men can practiſe in reſpect to their beſt intereſts, and the moſt valuable bleſſings our nature is capable of.

1. WOULD you enjoy health and life, and ſee good days? What can, or does generally contribute more to this than that temperance, that command of paſſion, and abſtinence from all riot and vicious exceſs, which religion preſcribes? Who are the men, whom you commonly obſerve moſt loaded with unnatural humours; expoſed to, and overtaken with ſevere diſorders and acute pains, and ſnatched away by an untimely death? Are they not the drunken and debauched, who rarely live out half their days, and embitter death by pains and ſorrows

ſorrows, which God and nature never made? What are moſt of our diſeaſes, that employ and perplex the phyſician, and glut death with thouſands at a meal, but the effects of our intemperance and luxury? And it is amazing that men who ſee the miſerable effects of theſe vices in ſo many fatal inſtances, dare continue the commiſſion, if not for God's ſake, yet for the ſake of their health, their life, and the proper uſe of their faculties. To live according to the precepts of religion, is only not to exceed the juſt and modeſt demands of nature, not to multiply unneceſſary humours, not to encumber the wheels, and overſtrain the veſſels of the nice machine: by which diſcipline, if your appetites, and the juſt tone of your faculties are preſerved, your ſpirits enlivened, your health invigorated, and the reliſhes and bleſſings of life both improved and heightened, would not every wiſe man adopt ſuch diſcipline? And who but a fool would deſpiſe it? Can we conceive a greater folly than to purſue ſuch a courſe of con-

duct, as at the ſame time embitters life with pains, diſeaſe and languor, reduces old age into a ſtate of dotage, and renders, or ſhould render the horrors of death more terrible? What does religion require of you, in commanding you to be temperate in all things, but to conſult the beſt intereſts of your animal nature, without which all the pleaſures and honours of life muſt be taſteleſs and inſipid? If the beauty and livelineſs of youth, freſh and untainted; if vigour and ſtrength of manhood, unbroken and unenfeebled; if the ſerenity of old age, not bowed down with diſeaſe, or diſgraced by the ſimplicity and folly of childhood; if theſe are deſirable bleſſings, let us thank God for lending his authority to enforce a practice, which promotes theſe valuable ends.

2. If religion thus brings you "length of days in her right hand, in her left" ſhe preſents you with "riches and honour." I do not here propoſe riches as the proper purſuit of a wiſe man, or as a good, which religion

religion propoſes as her proper and only reward: many good men have been diſtinguiſhed and ennobled by their poverty; as "the Son of man," our bleſſed Redeemer, himſelf "had not," when he ſojourned upon earth, "where to lay his head:" yet riches may be honeſtly acquired, innocently poſſeſſed, and innocently enjoyed and expended. And when they are thus ſanctified in the uſe, they are certainly not a curſe, but a bleſſing: they render us independent of the aſſiſtance of others, they command the neceſſaries and elegancies of life: they enable us to be "eyes to the blind, and feet to the "lame; to feed the hungry, to cloathe the "naked," and to bring the poor that are caſt out, into our houſe, for their relief and comfort.

Now religion contributes to our temporal intereſt by the induſtry it enjoins, and the fair reputation which it beſtows on thoſe who are its ſincere profeſſors. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," not only by the

fruits of its labour, but by the frugality and temperance it obſerves, and the few expenſive pleaſures which it is at liberty or leiſure to indulge, while engaged in an honeſt occupation. Beſides, the ſober and active have great advantage from their practice and experience in buſineſs: they improve upon the old, ſtrike out new plans, and ſee advantages and opportunities, which eſcape the indolent and inattentive.

THE character of the religious man, as acting upon principles of conſcience, is another advantage in buſineſs, as it gives him credit, and gains the confidence of all, who love good faith in others, at leaſt for their own ſakes, as they would not be expoſed to fraud and impoſition.

ABOVE all, beſides the ordinary courſe of nature, thus favourable to the attempts and proſperity of the good man; the eſpecial bleſſings, and particular providence, the promiſes, the faithfulneſs and truth of God himſelf

himſelf are engaged to defend, to protect and proſper him: and ſo effectually are theſe made good to him, that we may in general adopt the obſervation of the Pſalmiſt: "Once was I young, but now am old, yet "never ſaw I the righteous forſaken, or his "ſeed begging their bread." They are, in general, ſufficiently, if not amply provided for, by a competency, which renders the poſſeſſor as happy as thoſe who enjoy more ample fortunes.

3. If it is a part of wiſdom to reſpect our character, our reputation, and the good eſteem of mankind, we cannot better provide for this, than by a conduct formed upon the principles, and regulated by the laws and precepts of religion. Though men may ſometimes degenerate, and be averſe to the practice themſelves, yet few arrive at that degree of depravity, as not to revere and admire the charms of virtue in others. Integrity and good faith, humanity, benevolence and charity are in and of themſelves ſo lovely,

ly, and contribute ſo largely to the benefit of others, that it is impoſſible to reſiſt the voice, the grace and allurement of thoſe moral charmers. The practice of theſe virtues will give beauty and dignity to the loweſt character; while the want of them will ſtamp the higheſt with infamy and diſgrace. Indeed there is no ſuch thing as dignity, or beauty of character, no true honour, or good fame, without virtue or the appearance of it. Princes may beſtow titles and nominal diſtinctions of honour: they may raiſe their favourites to power, to place and pre-eminence; but they cannot convey a great ſoul with a great name; nor will the royal ſtamp convert droſs into gold, or ennoble ſlaves, ſycophants and cowards. Nobility without virtue is but exalted infamy. The great name ſerves only the more to expoſe the baſe, the mean and little ſoul. A great wicked man is held accurſed by his own times, and deteſtable to all future ages: but the memory of the juſt and good man is ſacred and immortal: his name, like preci-

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ous ointment, ſheds an odour round it: men riſe up when he is mentioned, and call him bleſſed.

4. But though honours, health and fortune, or a competence, as far as they are founded in, or the effects of virtue, are to be conſidered as bleſſings, and the acquiſition of them attended to by every wiſe man, yet in and of themſelves they do not properly conſtitute our happineſs, nor take in the whole of our being and well-being. No firmneſs of bone and nerve, no accumulation of fortune, no eminence of power, no extent of fame, or ſplendor of greatneſs can reach the ſpirit of a man, or ſatisfy his immortal faculties: the ſoul cannot feed on ſenſe or nature, on fortune or reputation, or the united voice and applauſe of mankind in its favour. The approbation of conſcience, the approbation of God, hopes of the favour, and confidence in the protection of heaven, the terrors of death ſubdued, and the comfortable proſpect of immortal life,

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and future happineſs and glory; theſe are what alone can adminiſter ſolid peace, and the trueſt and ſublimeſt ſatisfaction that the ſoul of man is capable of. We may be rich and fortunate, or what the world calls ſuch; we may be powerful, great and honourable, the admiration of the people, or the favourite of the prince, but happy we cannot be without peace of conſcience and the comforts of religion. The man moſt compleatly wretched, is he who lives "having no hope, "and without God in the world." He is without a proper ſenſe of joy in the beſt fortune, and without ſupport or comfort in the worſt: the ſport of chance or accident, the ſlave of nature or paſſion in life, and at beſt the prey of worms, or an undone bankrupt in death. If there is a ſpecies of folly of greater magnitude, and which ſpeaks us idiots more than the reſt, it is that of him, who renounces the protection of God, and the hopes of immortality: other inſtances of folly may affect our preſent fortune, our momentary intereſts, our health, or perhaps

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our reputation in the world: but the folly of impiety and irreligion reaches high as heaven, and deep as hell, ſhuts out the favour of God, poiſons the very ſoul, deſtroys both body and ſoul, and cancels our title to eternal ſalvation. What, or who deſerves the name and imputation of folly like him, who denies and deſpiſes his God, defies Almighty vengeance, and renounces his immortal hopes? What folly like that, which ſhews itſelf inſenſible to the reliſh of truth, to the dignity of reaſon, to the charms of virtue, to peace of conſcience, and hopes of glory? The childiſh ignorance, which prefers pebbles to diamonds, and what is pleaſing to the taſte to the moſt ſalubrious medicines, demands our pity: but the folly of the man, who prefers guilt to innocence, and Belial or Mammon to God, earth to heaven, and time before eternity, calls for our admiration, and provokes our contempt, if not our deteſtation.

It were ſcarce credible, did we not ſee daily inſtances of it, that men ſhould live in ſuch obvious contradiction to nature, truth and reaſon, to honour and conſcience, to virtue and piety, to the laws of God and men, in contempt and in defiance of, and to the deſtruction of all their hopes and intereſts, mortal and immortal. When we ſee the natural idiot, or the brute actuated, and acting by mere inſtinct and blind paſſion, we are neither ſhocked nor ſurprized, as intellect is wanting to direct them to higher views and fairer proſpects and purſuits: but that men, born with faculties to diſcern and compare different objects, and with liberty to chuſe the better part, ſhould chuſe darkneſs rather than light, ſhame rather than glory, and miſery and deſtruction before ſalvation and happineſs, is ſuch an inſtance of folly and perverſeneſs as were incredible, did we not ſee it practiſed, and what is more, defended. But as all folly is tedious, and this not only irkſome but ſhocking and melancholy, let us drop the ſubject.

Away

AWAY then with folly and madneſs, with infidelity and impiety, and may all the world keep ſilence, while wiſdom, ſacred wiſdom, heaven-born wiſdom aſſerts her prerogatives, enumerates her bleſſings, and publiſhes her gracious and happy effects to mankind.

RELIGION orders all your ſteps aright; preſcribes the proper rule of your conduct, and ſhews what is due from you, to yourſelf, your neighbour and your God; religion aſſiſts you not only in the knowledge, but enforces more ſtrongly the practice of your duty, enjoining it on the principles of conſcience by the terrors of the Almighty, and by promiſes and bleſſings "of the life "that now is, and of that which is to come."

RELIGION has the ſame powerful influence in ſupporting you in what you have to ſuffer, as in aſſiſting you in what you have to do. The character of God, as "righteous "in all his ways, and holy in all his works," all-wiſe

all-wiſe to know, all-good and gracious to intend, and Almighty to execute what is in all caſes the beſt, and moſt conducive to your greateſt intereſts, and moſt important and durable happineſs; a God your Creator, Protector and Preſerver, your Father, "the "Father of mercies, and the God of all com-"fort," is a ſecurity to you in every ſituation, and will afford you ſupport and confidence in the moſt troubled and tempeſtuous ſcenes of life; the comforts of religion will ſtand by you, and remain with you, when every human ſupport, friends and fortune, place and preeminence, honours and titles can afford you no relief. If God has ſubjected you to the pains and troubles of a ſhort life, yet he has withal given you the aſſurance of his preſence and protection, the comfort of immortal hopes, and the proſpect of unfading and eternal glory in heaven.

RELIGION in reſpect of its preſent influence, as well as of its important conſequences, muſt not only form the practice, but engage

engage the attention, and conſtitute the happineſs and delight of every, the wiſeſt and moſt reaſonable Being. It is the foundation, the ſubſtance, the ſoul and crown of every thing that is good and great, lovely, holy and happy in human natnre, and in the univerſe of being. Religion in its extent comprehends God, and angels, and men, things preſent and things to come, heaven and earth, time and eternity; in its power it is like its Author, almighty and effectual, or however ſufficient to correct and reform every enormity, and heal every malignity in the moral world. Religion, and religion alone can be ſaid to bind kings in chains, and nobles in links of iron: it is the authority of God himſelf, ſufficient to humble the proudeſt, to reſtrain the moſt licentious, and to command the higheſt powers upon earth. If religion exerts the power of God in enforcing duty, and exacting good faith from all orders and ranks of men upon the obligations of conſcience, and the ſanction of rewards and puniſhments more than mor-

tal, its power and divinity is not leſs apparent in the happy effects it produces on thoſe who obey its precepts, and believe in and live by its principles. Our holy religion was firſt eſtabliſhed by miracles; its heavenly origin and divine authority are ſtill manifeſt by the operation it works on the hearts, the manners and conduct of its ſincere diſciples. "Come unto me, all ye that la-"bour, and are heavy laden, and I will give "you reſt: take my yoke upon you, and "learn of me, and ye ſhall find reſt unto "your ſouls," was the gracious invitation of our Lord to his hearers: he and his goſpel ſtill invite us in the ſame gracious ſtrain. The graces, the principles and promiſes of chriſtianity, are the power of God unto ſalvation both preſent and future. Religion, where it is ſincerely embraced, gives health, or at leaſt contentment and patience to the ſick, joy to the penitent, ſtrength to the weak, ſight to the blind, and life in death itſelf. Read the hiſtory of the church, and you will find its ſincere members reſigned

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in every condition, and happy in every ſtation of life; though they had nothing, they wanted nothing; they took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, and though poor, they abounded in all things: feeble as they were in themſelves, ſtrengthened with might in the inner man, they defied the ſwords of their enemies, they ſang praiſes to God, as conquerors celebrate their triumph, in the priſon, or in the midſt of the flames: ſwallowed up as it were with a ſenſe of God's love, and of thoſe good things which he has prepared for them that love him, they ſeem to have foregone or forgotten the feelings of nature or ſenſe, and to have lived only to God, and in God, and with God.

RELIGION recommends itſelf to the vulgar ſoul, and the ordinary underſtanding, as the beſt parent and ſource of health, riches, reputation and honour in this world: but the ſincere and ardent lover of God deſpiſes honours, fortune, health and life it-

ſelf, whenever they come in competition with his duty, with the principles of his faith, and the proſpect of his eternal happineſs: and though the life of the retired chriſtian may ſeem to be fooliſhneſs in the ſight of men, and the end of the martyr to be without honour, yet Eternal Wiſdom applauds, and angels join in this triumphant ſong: "How are they numbered among the chil-"dren of God, and their lot is among the "ſaints!"

IT is but as a moment, my brethren, that intervenes between the cradle and the grave; and when we come to die, as die we muſt, what ſentence will true wiſdom paſs on the offices we have filled, the honours we have bore, the pleaſures we have enjoyed, or the fortune we have poſſeſſed? She will pronounce them all a ſhadow, an unſubſtantial ſhadow, or as a dream when one awaketh. But the wiſdom which religion preſcribes and practiſes, manifeſts itſelf moſt in this time of tribulation, the hour of death:

death: it looks back with pleaſure on a life ſpent in all good conſcience towards God and man: it experiences ſtrong conſolation in the Divine Power, Goodneſs and Mercy. The loſs of the world is abundantly made up by "a treaſure laid up, which waxeth not old, eternal in the heavens." This is indeed wiſdom, which intends and labours for the intereſts both of life and death, of time and of eternity. It muſt give comfort to every paſſing momenr of life to reflect, that in acting the religious, we are acting the wiſe part; a part which our reaſon juſtifies, which our conſcience approves, and which God and angels applaud. The religious life is in and of itſelf, could we exclude its conſequences, or were they only probable, the happieſt life we can chooſe: and an epicure, who would act up to his principles, ſhould adopt it for pleaſure's ſake. To be religious, is to live with God, in his favour, and in his preſence: it is to hear his voice, to ſee his light, to be inflamed with his love, and raviſhed with his perfec-

perfections. To be religious, is to be armed againſt the aſſaults, and raiſed above the miſeries and terrors of this world: it is to be ſecure in all events, reſigned in every condition, and bleſſed under every diſpenſation of Providence. To be religious, is to be armed with immortal ſtrength, to be directed by Divine Wiſdom, to be protected by the Divine Goodneſs, and to be partakers of the Divine Mercy. To be religious, is to be the ſons of God, formed to his image, and heirs of his promiſes: it is to dwell in the gate of heaven, to breathe the air of paradiſe, and join in the devout exerciſes and happy devotions of ſaints and angels.

To conclude: To be religious and holy, is to be perfect and happy as human nature is capable of in the preſent ſtate; it is to have the temper and a foretaſte of heaven itſelf; as the love of God and a powerful and living ſenſe of his preſence and perfections, no doubt, conſtitute the happineſs of heaven.

heaven. Would you then be happy? Were there a perſon, or perſons upon earth, with whom I was moſt intimately connected, and whoſe happineſs I ſhould deſire moſt cordially to advance; was it the wife of my boſom, or the children of my love; my brother, or a friend whom I eſteemed as a brother; my firſt, my principal, my ſingle advice to them ſhould be only this: be religious. My ſecond advice ſhould be, if required, be religious: and as a proof of my ſincerity towards God and man, I would with my dying lips give my aſſent to this as the moſt certain and important truth: that to be religious and holy, is the way, the only way to be truly happy.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE GOOD MAN,

A SERMON OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF *WILLIAM STRATFORD* Esq. L.L.D. LATE COMMISSARY OF THE ARCH-DEACONRY OF RICHMOND. TO WHICH IS ANNEXED HIS CHARACTER.

THE THIRD EDITION.

LUKE xxiii. 50.

And behold, there was a man named Joſeph, a counſellor, and he was a good man.

THOUGH it may be doubtful whether the Evangeliſt ſpeaks here by way of admi-

admiration; yet, conſidering the general depravity of mankind, it certainly calls for ſome wonder to ſee a good man at any time, and in any country: he is almoſt ſingular, like the ſun, as well as beneficial like him; and by his ſuperior ſplendor, attracts univerſal attention.

But Joſeph was a rich man, as we are told by another of the evangeliſts, and yet a good man. A great fortune is not always favourable to the growth of virtue; proſperous circumſtances, like a luxuriant ſoil uncultivated, too frequently produce the noiſome weeds of vice, inſtead of the gracious fruits of goodneſs.

He was of Arimathea: that is, as is generally, and I think juſtly ſuppoſed, a native of one of the cities of Jewry, and himſelf a Jew; for it is ſaid, "he waited for the conſolation of Iſrael." We have here then, a rich Jew, and yet a good man: one who had made the ſcriptures his ſtudy:

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one who, amidſt the general blindneſs and bigotry of his countrymen, was open to conviction, amidſt the general infidelity was a believer; and againſt the proverbial ſelfiſhneſs ſtill aſcribed to this people, ſhewed himſelf humane and benevolent.

He was moreover a counſellor: a member probably of the great Sanhedrim, and thence more likely to be influenced by the popular clamour, and general intereſt, as it would be thought, of his nation; at leaſt, for the ſake of his peace and preferment, he ſhould not have ſeem'd inclined to run counter to the meaſures of the great council, and of their preſident, the high prieſt, who probably acted as prime-miniſter upon this occaſion. Yet Joſeph preſerved his integrity, amidſt the ſtrife of tongues, and the violence of paſſion and party; and "conſented not to the deed and counſel of them," who deſtroyed the Lord Jeſus. This indeed only proved him a juſt man; but he was likewiſe a good man; not content with not

not injuring the cauſe of the living, he extended his concern to the care of the dead: "he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jeſus." Our Lord had been condemned as a criminal, and executed as a malefactor; and thence we may infer, that an infamous place of burial was deſigned for him. The ſtateſman interpoſes, and reſcues him from the diſhonours of the grave: "takes down "his body, and wrapped it in linen, and "laid it in a ſepulchre, which was hewn in "ſtone, wherein never man before was laid." This was what no laws, but thoſe of piety and humanity obliged him to; what nothing but the love of God and man could inſpire. The greatneſs of ſuch a conduct will appear, by imagining we ſaw at this day a ſtateſman, living a perfect ſtranger to the heats of faction, and performing the ſame kind office to a malefactor; to one, who had been adjudged an enemy, both to the religion and civil policy of his country.

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We know not in what other beneficent actions this good man employed himſelf: but as a principle of goodneſs, once rooted in the heart, will extend itſelf through a man's whole conduct, there is little room to queſtion but Joſeph was uniformly good; and from the ſhort account here given of him, we may take occaſion to ſhew the character of the good man in general, and the excellency of this principle of goodneſs.

I. 1. The good man reſpecting God, is a character of the moſt confirmed and exalted piety: one not confounded by the terrors of Omnipotence, and bending under the yoke of religion, like a trembling ſlave before the throne of his tyrant; but paying a chearful and willing obedience; flowing from a ſenſe of the Divine Goodneſs, and aiming at ſome degree of the Divine Perfection. His ſervice is not like a debt exacted, and diſcharged; but is a free-will offering. As in his outward behaviour he con-

contributes not only his legal proportion to the ſupport of the altar, but reſpects the beauty, as well as the uſe of the temple of God, and adorns as well as repairs it; ſo in his devotions, he goes beyond the letter, to the ſpirit of the law: he conforms, but does not limit himſelf to ſtated duties and public offices; nor ſays to his ſoul, "hitherto ſhalt thou go, and no further." The love of God, is a principle active, and progreſſive; neither circumſcribed, nor weary in well-doing. Where the object is infinite, and infinitely lovely: a mine of truth, for ever opening; an orb of light, for ever beaming; an ocean of goodneſs, for ever flowing; we cannot love with too much ardour; nor can we pay too zealous and devout adoration. While to others, the remembrance of God is grievous, and therefore ſeldom in their thoughts; to the good man, the meditation of him is both ſweet and frequent. His religion, is devotion; his devotion, an incenſe daily aſcending to heaven, from a heart enflamed by

by a fire from heaven. While the more ſober rationaliſts conſider religion, as a mere ſubject of enquiry, and fill their heads with doubts, and difficulties, require demonſtration for every ſtep they take, and make a merit of believing what they ſee, the good man's heart is captivated; he rejoices with reverence, and adores with fervor.

2. BUT ſtill, mere acts of devotion, known only between God, and a good man's ſoul, are not ſufficient teſtimonies, though natural and neceſſary effects of true goodneſs. The monaſtic in his cell, and the hermit in the cave, or in the mountain, have been, and ſtill are eſteemed by ſome, the beſt good men. I would not willingly ſeem to reflect on ſuch, who from a real, though miſguided zeal, or from an extravagant greatneſs of mind, have thus "forſaken all to follow Chriſt." But ſupported by the authority of an Apoſtle, I may ſay, "that pure religion and undefiled,

"is

"is, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows "in their affliction," as well as to keep "ourſelves unſpotted from the world." The evidence which God requires of our love to him, is the love of one another. But the recluſe and the devotee, while they ſay, they do not love the world, in effect ſeem to hate mankind. They ſhare not in the ordinary duties of ſocial life; are uſeful members of no living community, or however, dead to all the offices needful for preſerving the body politic, and advancing the common good: if they ſhare not in other men's joys, neither are they partakers of other men's ſorrows: at a ſafe diſtance from the ſins and miſeries of their fellow-creatures, they contribute not to reform the one, or remove the other. Their own, and not the common happineſs and ſalvation, ſeems to be the aim and end of their conduct.

But goodneſs is not a ſolitary virtue: it loſes its nature, and ought to loſe its name, when

when confined to mean ſelf-love; which is an inſtinct, and not a virtue. True goodneſs is converſant in the public; and takes in all the relations and offices of life. A good man is a common father, concerned for the intereſts, and anxious for the happineſs of all men; pities the diſtreſſes of the miſerable, which fall under his notice, and relieves their wants, as far as his abilities will permit him. "He rejoices with thoſe "that do rejoice, and weeps with thoſe that "weep." He cannot think that world below his regard, and unworthy of his preſence, which is the ſcene and ſubject of the Divine Providence. Senſible of God's mercy, he knows that mercy is every one's due. He never denies acceſs to any, who have acceſs to the throne of grace: he cannot but love thoſe whom God created, and the Son of God died to redeem: he conſiders his fellow-creatures, with reſpect to chriſtian privileges (the only valuable diſtinctions of our nature) as upon a level one with another: he remembers

that he owes a duty to his neighbour, as well as to himſelf, and to his God. He ſees, that the world would be poor, notwithſtanding the bounty of Providence, without mutual communication, and the kind offices of ſocial life. Hence, the good man aſſumes no ſuperiority from his natural or civil advantages; conſcious who gave, and who it is that will demand an account of his talents, he "neither buries them in the earth," nor "lays them up in a napkin:" if he has knowledge, he employs it to inſtruct the ignorant, and to convince the obſtinate: if he has power, he exerts it to protect the innocent, and to redreſs the injured; "to break the jaws of the wicked, and to pluck the ſpoil out of his teeth." If he has wealth, he conſiders it as a treaſure from heaven to be drawn forth at the demands of the miſerable. Whatever his capacity or endowments are, he views himſelf in no other light than as an inſtrument in the hand of Providence, to diffuſe more goodneſs, and make a happy world: he loves

loves all men, does good where he can, pities where he cannot relieve: ſends up his prayers for the wicked, and gives his kind wiſhes, as God does the ſhower and ſunſhine, "to the juſt and to the unjuſt."

THE good man is kind, as well as beneficent; and not more compaſſionate than obliging. He has peace within him, and this gives an agreeable complacency to his whole demeanour. His very frowns are gilded with the rays of goodneſs, which ſtream from his heart; and the cloudieſt aſpect he puts on cannot conceal the ſerenity and heaven within his breaſt. He does violence to his nature, if he does an ungracious thing: in refuſing a favour aſked, he will oblige the man whom he refuſes. His very denials have a better grace, and perhaps more real kindneſs, than other men's favours; as his favours, from the manner of doing them, have a double value.

CANDOUR is inſeparable from goodneſs:

a good heart is not ſuſpicious: he that does no ill, will therefore think no ill. When we truly love mankind, we ſhall with reluctance hear, and report with pain, any thing to their diſadvantage. With pleaſure a good man attends to every thing that favours his neighbour's good name and character; but requires demonſtration, before he entertains a thought to his prejudice. He conſequently demands a full hearing, before he will judge; and does not paſs ſentence before examination. He would rather excuſe than aggravate the failings of thoſe he loves. "He rejoiceth not when his neigh-"bour's foot ſlippeth, nor magnifieth him-"ſelf againſt him:" with ſorrow he ſees other men's failings; and from a ſenſe of tenderneſs, would go backward and throw a veil over a brother's nakedneſs. Thus Joſeph the huſband of Mary being a juſt man, intended to put away his wife; but being alſo a good man, he was "not willing to "make her a public example, but was "minded to put her away privily."

THERE

THERE is a ſelfiſh, phariſaical goodneſs, or rather godlineſs, as it is called: a ſaintſhip without humanity, that is cenſorious and ill-natured, and fond of finding, rather than mending faults; but "rivers of water "run down a good man's eyes, becauſe men "keep not God's law."

THIS candid and charitable diſpoſition, renders the good man's converſation agreeable, as well as innocent. Scandal envenoms not his tongue, and his wit is never pointed by malice. He comes into company to improve good humour, and to diffuſe a part of that humanity which overflows his breaſt. He ſees in every face, a friend; his brow expands; his heart dilates to give and receive the ſocial joy. Diſtruſtful of himſelf, he aſſerts with modeſty; and is willing to learn, as well as to teach: he would convince without confuting, and rather win than conquer his enemy. His zeal is for the dignity of truth, and not the honour of a triumph: he hears with patience, and informs with

pleaſure: he argues without prejudice, ſubmits without obſtinacy, or triumphs without inſolence.

As an adverſary, if a good man can be any one's adverſary, he ſeeks no revenge, but his conviction and reformation; he would rather recover his friendſhip, than ſee his fall. He will "not rejoice at the "deſtruction of him who hates him, nor "lift up himſelf, when evil finds him." A good man's anger, if he can be angry, is a flaſh, and diſappears: he is ſlow to reſent, but ready to forgive; and even ingenious in framing an excuſe for an injury done him. A miſdemeanor he will call a miſtake; ill uſage, where not maliciouſly perſiſted in, he will be willing to aſcribe to the ignorance, or miſ-information of the ill-doer. He will not demand formal ſatisfaction, and legal reparation for every treſpaſs, while he has any hope of juſtice in a friendly way; he would forego a trifling right, rather than contend for it; and ſave even a knave his bluſhes,

bluſhes, were not the public a ſufferer, and the cauſe of goodneſs betrayed by ſuch a connivance.

In his domeſtic capacity, a good man will appear a father, more than a maſter: he will not be as a lion in his houſe, nor frantic among his ſervants. If he have a ſervant, "he will be unto him as himſelf:" he will "entreat him as a brother, becauſe he has need of him, as of his own ſoul." A good man will correct with kindneſs, rebuke with tenderneſs, inform with patience, and command with humanity. He will deſire where he might command, perſuade where he might inſiſt, and pay a compliment where he might exact a ſervice.

Goodness in a Magiſtrate will incline him to mercy, as well as juſtice, and make him deſirous to reform, rather than puniſh; or to puniſh, only in order to reform: it will make the judge drop a tear for the perſon he condemns, and the executioner a

ſufferer with the criminal. We cannot but feel pain when a member is cut off from our own body, and nothing leſs than a more general good, the preſervation of the whole, could oblige us to ſubmit to this ſacrifice.

In a General, goodneſs diſpoſes him to conquer, if poſſible, without blood, and to triumph without inſult over his vanquiſhed enemy.

Goodness in a Prince will diſpoſe him to conſider his power, as a truſt repoſed in him, for the happineſs of his people. The grandeur of his office he will make to conſiſt, not in the glitter of a crown, nor in the pomp which ſurrounds a throne, nor in the reverence and homage that is paid him by fawning ſlaves, or flattering ſubjects; but in the ſolid advantages he procures, and the bleſſings he conveys to a nation. A good king will be the ſhepherd, and the father of his people: their riches he will eſteem his beſt treaſure; their affection his ſtrongeſt

ſupport,

ſupport, and beſt applauſe; and their happineſs his trueſt glory. He will anſwer the prophetic deſcription of the regal office, and reſemble that ſtrong and ſtately tree, "whoſe "height reached unto the heavens, and the "ſight thereof to the extremities of the "earth:" the ornament and happineſs of the plains around it! "Its leaves were fair, "and its fruit abundant: it was meat for "all: the beaſts of the field repoſed under "its ſhadow, and the birds of heaven lodg-"ed in its branches!"

I WILL only add, what may concern us more, that goodneſs in ſubjects, as well as in the ſovereign, would equally contribute to make a nation happy. If goodneſs inclines princes to rule in mercy, it will alſo make ſubjects obey with chearfulneſs. A good man will not ſpeak evil of the ruler of his people. The weight of a crown is a burden, which calls for his pity towards thoſe who ſupport it. He hopes and rejoices in the beſt, and laments for the worſt

that

that happens in the courſe of affairs to his political parent. The public happineſs is the great object of his view; to which he ſacrifices all ſelfiſh paſſions, and party attachments: for the public miſery he mourns in ſecret; or contends without faction, and debates without malice, for the recovery or increaſe of national virtue; the greateſt grievance a good man knows in any ſtate, is a proſtitution of morals; the ſource whence infamy, poverty, ſlavery, and every ſpecies of national miſery are generally deduced.

WHERE a good man cannot heal, he will not widen the breaches of his country; and when he cannot procure, he "will pray for the peace of Jeruſalem."

DIFFERENCES in opinion, religious or civil, are ſooner reconciled, or more eaſily borne with, when true goodneſs is the foundation of our principles. A good man makes large allowances for the imperfections of human nature, and grants it poſſible for himſelf

himſelf to be in the wrong, as well as his adverſaries: or, where he has the plaineſt conviction of their errors, he will remember their prejudices, and by what means they have been imbibed: and that himſelf, under the ſame circumſtances, might probably have been ſubject to the ſame deluſion. A true chriſtian charity will allow us to deſpiſe no man, except the profeſſed enemy to God and goodneſs: and even this man, the moſt contemptible of all God's works, charity will incline us to reform, if poſſible, and to relieve, if he wants relief, though we are offended at his conduct, and deteſt his principles.

II. After ſurveying the character of the good man, leſs might be ſaid of the excellency of this principle of goodneſs: but as ſome men ſeem to be content with, nay, value themſelves upon a leſs degree of merit, and a lower character; by comparing this with the other virtues, moral and divine,

we may ſee how little ſuch moraliſts have to boaſt of.

1. THE other virtues in common practice, are far from this generous complexion. Frugality, for inſtance, more immediately regards a man's own eſtate; temperance, his own health; induſtry, his own ſubſiſtence; and juſtice is more watchful in preventing or puniſhing evil, than diffuſing good. The brave man often fights for his own fame, and the ſtateſman plans for his own greatneſs: but goodneſs ſanctifies every quality, and ennobles every virtue. It makes frugality a reſervoir to water a dry and barren wilderneſs, to bleſs the needy, and refreſh the traveller. A mere frugal man lets down his pitcher for his own uſe only: the good man, like Rebekah, waters the ſtrangers' camels alſo. Frugality without goodneſs is but a ſofter name for avarice.

TEMPERANCE, it muſt be allowed, contributes

tributes to the health of the body, and the vigour of the mind, and enlarges our ſphere of enjoyment, both with reſpect to the ſenſes, and the underſtanding; but goodneſs carries temperance ſtill further than ſelfiſh enjoyment: puſhes it on to action, to the diſcharge of the offices of ſocial life, to ſober conſultation, to cool and regular execution.

INDUSTRY is a virtue active and vigilant: the parent of plenty, or at leaſt of a competence, in proportion to the abilities and circumſtances of the man who is induſtrious, and the bleſſing of Providence attending his endeavours. But goodneſs gives it a larger ſcope than our own wants, or conveniences; takes in the public, as a common parent, whoſe wants muſt be provided for, though at the expence of our labour; and its happineſs ſupported, though at the hazard of our lives.

"JUSTICE," it has been ſaid by a learned

ed writer, "as it is the moſt commanding, "is at the ſame time the moſt winning vir- "tue among men." * In a private character it is ſurely but a beggarly virtue: if it pays what is due, it exacts what is due. No man is obliged to the man who practiſes it, no more than to the man who gives full change in ſilver for the gold he receives. Juſtice in public life is more uſeful, and its object more extenſive; and it may be more admired, when ſeated on a tribunal or a throne, as in ſuch an elevation it is more conſpicuous: but it is not upon this account more virtuous, or praiſe-worthy. To be uncorrupted in a public ſtation, is with reſpect to the merit of the action, but the ſame as not to betray a truſt, or forſwear a debt, in private life. But goodneſs is a ſuperior principle; as far ſuperior to juſtice, as money given in charity is more acceptable to God, than money paid for value received. Juſtice is a due; goodneſs a free-

* Memoirs of the Court of Auguſtus.

will

will offering. Juſtice gives us only our own: goodneſs makes us a ſharer in the fame, the fortunes and enjoyments of others. Juſtice is content with doing no ill: goodneſs delights to do all good. Juſtice examines with ſeverity, meaſures with an impartial hand, and condemns with an unrelenting heart: goodneſs makes fair allowances, "gives full meaſure preſſed down, and ſhaken together, and running over:" examines with candour, judges with mercy, and condemns with regret. Juſtice retaliates evil with evil: requires "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:" but goodneſs overcomes evil with good. Juſtice is like a uſeful building, where, if we find no faults, we obſerve no diſtinguiſhed beauties: but goodneſs is like "pillars of marble, ſet upon ſockets of fine gold." In the one, we have convenience, and juſt diſpoſition: in the other, we have elegance, as well as ſtrength, and beauty with uſe. In ſhort, we owe no thanks to the man who does us juſtice; no more than to the man who

does

does us no injury. A merely honeſt man is but one degree above a knave; a good man is ſcarce one degree below an angel.

VIEW man then in his different capacities, and higheſt excellencies: and without goodneſs, what is he? with conqueſt chained to his chariot wheel, but a more ſplendid murderer; with power, but better enabled to deſtroy and oppreſs mankind; with pomp, but the mockery of majeſty, an epicurean god; with wiſdom, but better qualified to undermine and deceive a brother; with juſtice, but an inexorable judge, and a ſevere inquiſitor, exacting from all their dues, but a ſtranger to the ſpirit of that Jeſus, who died for the unjuſt, and to the example of the Supreme God, who is not extreme to mark what is done amiſs.

2. BUT this leads us to conſider the divine virtues and chriſtian graces, and what figure this principle of goodneſs makes among them.

UNDER

UNDER the law, it was not the obſervation of days, or months, of new moons and ſabbaths; it was not the making many prayers with the "offering of thouſands "of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of "oil," that were ſo acceptable to God, as "to relieve the oppreſſed, to judge the fa-"therleſs, and to plead for the widow." In vain did a man "faſt and afflict his ſoul:" in vain did he "bow down his head as a "bulruſh, and ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes "under him:" in vain did he "come before "the Lord, and bow himſelf before the "high God:" all this pompous ſacrifice, rigid humiliation, and preciſe obſervance of ceremonial, were not only unacceptable, but declared abominable in the ſight of heaven, without the religion of the heart, and the exerciſe of mercy and truth. "Is not this the faſt that I have choſen," ſaith God by his prophet, "to looſe the bands of wicked-"neſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and to "let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye "break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy

" bread to the hungry, and that thou bring
" the poor that are caſt out, to thy houſe?
" When thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou
" cover him, and that thou hide not thy-
" ſelf from thy own fleſh?"

CHRISTIAN virtues are as little worth as Jewiſh obſervances, without this principle of goodneſs. Even thoſe eminent graces, prophecy, knowledge, faith and hope, the apoſtle aſſures us, are upon the compariſon inferior to charity. Charity is neceſſary to our common ſalvation; which prophecy is not: prophecy is more an evidence of God's goodneſs towards us, than of our love to him. Knowledge, conſidered in itſelf, is a mere gift of God to the poſſeſſor; in whom it is " a ſpring ſhut up, and a fountain ſealed," till charity bids it flow for the benefit and bleſſing of mankind. Thus faith and hope are in themſelves but private graces, enriching the proprietor; but charity beſtows, as well as receives mercy; and enlarged beyond the bounds of ſelf-intereſt,

and

and ſelf-preſervation, contends for the general happineſs. Faith is indeed a foundation, and hope a ſuperſtructure upon that foundation; but goodneſs is the very crown and completion of our ſpiritual building. The former are but means; but charity is the end of the commandment; and without which, our faith is a cold aſſent, or a raſh credulity; and our hope a fond preſumption. Hence the apoſtle St. Peter, after recounting the other virtues that ſhould compoſe the chriſtian character, "diligence, faith, "knowledge, temperance, patience, god-"lineſs," concludes with "brotherly kindneſs and charity," as the maſter-graces, which give the finiſhed heightening to the whole. The man of God is then perfect, when he is thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works. We adore as men; we humble ourſelves in duſt and aſhes, as ſinners; we believe and hope, as chriſtians; but when we do good, we ſeem raiſed above the infirmities of mortality, and to act the God-like part. Goodneſs is the perfection of

God, and the practice of angels. By faith we draw nigh unto God; but a good man is God's image.

III. To recommend this exalted principle to the world, let us laſtly conſider, the happy effect it has upon the practiſer, as well as upon the public.

Goodness is the moſt pleaſing virtue in practice. The good man has a happineſs within him, which no outward opulence can procure, nor ſenſualiſt conceive, nor painful ſtudy arrive at: which ambition ſighs for in vain, and a crown cannot give, nor take away. Goodneſs gives a triumph of heart, to which a mere conqueror is a ſtranger. It gives benignity and glory to the eye, ſweetneſs to the features,* muſic to the tongue, and rapture to the ſoul. It

* Quod ſi habitum quoque ejus poſteri noſcere velint, decentior quam ſublimior fuit: nihil metûs in vultu: *Gratia Oris ſupererat; bonum Virum facile crederes.* —— Tacit. Vit. C. 44.

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is bleſſed in what it poſſeſſes, in what it gives, in what it does, in what it ſuffers, in its own, in the happineſs of others. It is not life, but health; not health alone, but beauty: not exiſtence, but enjoyment: not duty, but delight: it is a kind of better heart, the centre and fountain of ſpirits moral, and joy rational, diffuſed through the human frame. Goodneſs is to the ſoul, what proper food is to the body, what God is to the univerſe, its ſupport and happineſs. A ſoul without goodneſs is like a world without a God, all darkneſs and diſorder: but a ſoul informed with, and enamoured of this divine principle, is like the temple, or the holy of holies, enriched with God's preſence, and full of light and glory. The good man lives in a purer air, breathes an etherial ſpirit, and views a more fruitful earth, and a brighter heaven, than what the ſordid and ſelfiſh enjoy.

SUPERIOR goodneſs is ſuperior reaſon: it is not only a better principle, but better

policy than honeſty: is attended with happier conſequences, as it is more eaſy and agreeable in practice. The good man acts not by preciſe rules, and rigid juſtice, but obeys the genuine dictates of a benevolent heart, free from preſent doubts, or the fear of future conſequences. While the juſt man can but reſtrain the outward behaviour and actions of others, the good man commands their affections; and is generally ſafe both from fraud and violence.

SUPERIOR goodneſs is ſuperior power: it finds, or makes all mankind our friends. Bad as the world is, it generally reverences diſtinguiſhed virtue; and is eaſily led, without ſuſpicion or reſerve, to approve the practice, and adopt the principles of one, whom they ſincerely love. It is ſaid of Barnabas, that "much people was added to the church by his miniſtry:" and no wonder, for the ſacred writer tells us, that "he was a good man," as well as that he was "full of the Holy Ghoſt. An enemy ſubdued by force, is

is ſtill an enemy; and more ſo perhaps, for being ſo ſubdued; but goodneſs not only gains, but ſecures a conqueſt; charms an adverſary to peace, and will make even a barbarian, or a bigot, your friend.

TRUE goodneſs adds ſtrength to the ſtrongeſt, and honour to the moſt honourable. It is a glory, brighter than that of a crown, and a ſupport, firmer than guards and armies: it is both a robe, and a diadem: the ſword and ſhield, as well as the ornament and happineſs of human life.

THIS is that etherial ſpirit, which gives beauty to the natural, and bliſs to the moral world: which makes every citizen a patriot, and every prince a father: which makes nations happy, and kings immortal: which gives us to act the God-like part, and in proportion as we imitate the manners, to taſte the joys of heaven.

SUPERIOR goodneſs, is ſuperior wiſdom:

the beſt ſecurity againſt time and accidents, and the ſureſt record of our fame to future ages. Let a few years paſs away, and we ſhall be no more: the memory of moſt will periſh, like the remembrance of a gueſt that tarrieth but a day. Marbles and monuments, and all the efforts of human art, to perpetuate a name and a family, may remain for a time, to commemorate the falſe wiſdom, or vain glory of thoſe who raiſed them: but marbles and monuments, and every effort of human art, muſt ſoon mix with vulgar duſt; and the clay of princes lie undiſtinguiſhed in the common maſs. But the memory of the juſt and good is immortal. Preſent and future ages, heaven and earth, God, and men, and angels, recite their virtues, and join in their applauſe.

Nor is this all: their fame will extend beyond the limits of time, and their reward be more than commenſurate with the duration of the world. Their names are written

in

in heaven. While others build on ſand, the good man reſts upon the rock of ages: having God for his ſecurity, and an etetnity for his reverſion. His building is ſure and ſtedfaſt; ſuch as will withſtand the fury of winds and ſtorms, and ſurvive the ruins of the univerſe. When the elements of nature, and of grace, ſhall be diſſolved: when knowledge ſhall be ſuperſeded by intuition: when faith ſhall be ſwallowed up by ſight, and hope by enjoyment, goodneſs will extend itſelf to a future world, and there rejoice with them that do rejoice. Our love will be enlarged, as it approaches its great object, and we are admitted to God's nearer preſence. The flame, no longer damped by the weight of ſenſe and the veil of nature, will burn more pure and bright. New happineſs communicated will raiſe new fervors; and the bliſs and glory of others, mingling beams with ours, will heighten the common joy.

SUCH is the good man! thus affected towards

towards others; thus happy in himſelf! thus exalted in his principles; thus beneficent in his practice! acceptable to God and approved of men! bleſſed in his deed, and more bleſſed in his proſpect!

THE CHARACTER OF

WILLIAM STRATFORD, ESQ. L.L.D.

THAT the character here given may not appear an imaginary portrait, drawn from a heated or enthuſiaſtic brain, and which neither has had, nor can have any exiſtence in life and nature, I ſhall here ſubjoin a real example of that goodneſs I would recommend; by which it may appear, that this exalted perfection of human nature is neither impoſſible, nor impracticable.

DR.

DR. STRATFORD was a gentleman, concerned in neither courts nor camps: his life, or rather his character, may therefore be leſs entertaining to the common reader, as exhibiting none of thoſe peculiar incidents, which are moſt ſtriking to the general paſſions of human nature. What the world calls greatneſs, and admires as wiſdom, can have here no place. Mere goodneſs is our theme, and we may be forgiven in endeavouring to edify, where we cannot entertain. The deſcription of a good man's life, attempted for the ſake of goodneſs, may, if it meets not with approbation, ſeem at leaſt to deſerve a pardon.

IT may be leſs neceſſary to ſay any thing of this gentleman's family, as advantages of this kind conſtitute no moral goodneſs; nor did he ever value himſelf on ſuch diſtinctions; though others might have thought it a high degree of honour to have been related to an eminent Biſhop in his time, and to the preſent Lord Chancellor.

THIS

THIS laſt connection he was not ambitious to make known; while he was induſtrious to find out, and kept up a conſtant correſpondence with, his poor though diſtant relations, ſome of whom he did not ſo properly relieve, as ſupport by his bounty.

I KNOW no more of his education and conduct in youth than this, that he had imbibed very early ſentiments of piety and virtue, which had, as they generally have, the moſt happy influence upon his future conduct.

HE was very ſoon engaged in buſineſs, which he diſcharged with great diligence and integrity, under three ſucceſſive Biſhops of Cheſter, Stratford, Dawes, and Gaſtrell. His conduct ſo recommended him to the laſt, that he promoted him, after he had taken his degrees, to the office he held during life.

THE firſt admonition he gave himſelf upon

upon his advancement to a place of conſiderable profit, prior to this, was "not to be elated, nor flatter himſelf with future expectations; but thankfully to acquieſce in his preſent condition."

A PRUDENT enjoyment and charitable diſtribution of what he gained, was one of his firſt reſolutions; and this formed upon a true eſtimate of the little value of riches and honours, made at an age too often ambitious of acquiring both. "Death, ſaid he, is at hand, I know not how ſoon; and "a new ſcene opens." Thus was he preparing to die, at a time when others begin to live!

WITH theſe ſentiments it is no wonder to find among his earlieſt memorandums, this caution, "To abate of my legal demands, and my juſt fees, in caſes of poverty."

THE peace of a contented mind, was all the

the happineſs he aimed at in this life. To procure this, he limited his thoughts, as much as poſſible, to his own ſphere and proper duty; and never intermeddled in the buſineſs of others, but where conſcience and charity obliged him.

SOME inſtances I remember, where he has, by means of a third perſon, conveyed his advice to remove prejudices, and avert danger and damage; and one in particular, where this kind office was done to a perſon, who, he believed had greatly injured him.

WE need leſs wonder at ſuch inſtances of humanity, when we recollect his ſteady attachment to religion.

THE being and attributes of God, his works of goodneſs, and diſpenſations of mercy, were ſtill uppermoſt in his thoughts, and the conſtant ſubject of his meditations. His notions of the ſupreme Being were awful and reverent, yet happy and delightful.

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He had gain'd a true magnificence of thought in reſpect to the divine adminiſtration; looking on all things, ſubmitting to all, and rejoicing in all, as permitted or ordered by the will of heaven, and finally tending to the happineſs of man. If any thing appeared adverſe, or unaccountable in the courſe of the world, he adored in ſilence, and would not attempt to penetrate, or preſume to object to the ways of Providence. He thought it better to confide in the divine conduct, and to wait the event, than to diſpute the equity, or explore the cauſe.

His notions of religion in general were enlarged and noble. He made it to conſiſt not in the preciſeneſs of a ceremonial, which he ſaid, was no better than the popiſh *opus operatum*, nor in a mere ſyſtem of opinions; in a belief without reaſon, and a practice without piety: but in a divine agency upon the ſoul of man; reforming his heart, ſanctifying his nature, raiſing his ſpirit above the

the world, and uniting his affections to God the beſt good, and the fulneſs of all things.

YET was he never wanting in the inſtituted means of grace; being always conſtant (as long as he was able) and attentive to the public adminiſtrations of the church. In theſe, however, it is very certain that he did not place the whole of religion: he was careful to diſtinguiſh between means and ends; between occaſional or ſtated acts of worſhip, and a general habit of piety; and he would ſometimes lament, that too many ſeemed to confine their duty to the church, and its inſtitutions: theſe, with him, were no more than inſtrumental, and as ſuch commanded, and neceſſary; but never intended to be final in the buſineſs of ſalvation. He was not more regular in the public, than in his private devotions; theſe he always made the firſt and laſt buſineſs of the day.

NOR were his religious exerciſes thus limited: he had a competent manual of prayers

prayers; ſome of which he had compoſed for his own particular uſe, and others he had collected from the moſt eminent authors, and digeſted the whole in his own hand, into proper forms, for all the common occaſions of a chriſtian life: and it is to be leſs admired, that he was ſo eminently adorned with thoſe divine graces, the acquiſition of which he made the conſtant ſubject of his prayers. Abroad or at home, he had his regular hours of retreat from buſineſs and company, to attend with more leiſure and abſtraction to the objects of his faith, and to entertain his mind with the glories of the inviſible world. It was here he poſſeſſed his ſoul in ſilence and peace. It was here he was properly himſelf, ſhut up within himſelf, the world excluded, and a converſe opened, with God and immortal ſpirits. It was here he loſt ſight of this habitable globe, extended his proſpect to new heavens and a new earth, and familiarized himſelf to the kingdom of the juſt; and as in public he imitated the kind offices, ſo he

ſeemed in private to enjoy the happineſs of ſome good angel.

NOR did his devotions ſtop here: piety was become the temper and complexion of his ſoul. God had engaged and poſſeſſed his heart; which would frequently break out into ſhort and fervent expreſſions towards the ſupreme object of his love. When his lips were cloſed, his eye ſpoke, and in a language which his friends could well underſtand.

RELIGION was not to him a burden, but a delight: its offices he performed not as a taſk, but embraced them as a privilege; he conformed to the will of heaven, not as what he muſt do, but as what he would do; and ran with pleaſure, as well as patience, the race that was ſet before him.

THOUGH he was thus remarkably devout, and ſingularly fervent, yet was there nothing formal, auſtere, ill-natured, or oſtentatious

tatious in his manners, and ordinary converſation. He lived as an inhabitant, though he eſteemed himſelf a ſtranger upon earth. He ſhared in the duties, and ſometimes in the innocent diverſions, while he kept himſelf diſengaged from the criminal pleaſures, and ſordid purſuits of life.

GENERAL and frequent company, the faſhional rage of gaming, the conſtancy and ardour, with which the trifling amuſements of the age are purſued, were always greatly diſtaſteful to his ſedate, and heaven-directed mind: he thought the dignity of reaſon was hereby proſtituted, the duties of religion neglected, and the true ſpirit of chriſtianity as effectually deſtroyed, as by more groſs immoralities. Yet his ſentiments of this kind he never expreſſed but in private to his particular friends. He gave himſelf not the liberty in public company, to exclaim at large againſt the manners of the age, nor cared to talk much of religion with thoſe, who had little or no taſte for it. This he

thought an intemperate zeal, and a kind of proſtitution of holy things, which frequently diſcredited the cauſe it would advance, and looked like hypocriſy, or affectation; and all affectation he avoided, as unbecoming and diſagreeable in things of the leaſt moment, but in religion both imprudent and criminal.

He was a ſincere chriſtian, without much ſhew. He would have his faith in the goſpel appear by his deeds, rather than by his words. His zeal for its advancement, he ſufficiently teſtified by a large diſtribution of ſuch books among the poor, as he judged moſt proper to promote the knowledge and practice of chriſtianity; and above all by his own example, and habitual piety. Thus he inſtructed without pride, and bid faireſt to reform, while he would not ſeem to reproach mankind. The religious ſeverities of pagans and mahometans, compared with the licentious manners of nominal chriſtians, affected him much; and he reſolved by his

own

own life to remove, as much as was in one man's power, this ſcandal objected to our holy religion.

His ſteady faith in the goſpel, and uniform obedience to its law, were chiefly built on its intrinſic evidence: he had indeed, peruſed, and made extracts from, the beſt modern defences of chriſtianity, and was confirmed in his creed by obſerving thoſe great names, Mr. Boyle, Mr. Locke, Sir Iſaac Newton, and Mr. Addiſon, in whom genius and ſcience ſhone ſo conſpicuous, uniting in their ſuffrage to the truth and reaſonableneſs of revelation; he had in a ſummary way collected, and ſet in one view, the collateral evidence ariſing to the goſpel-hiſtory, from the teſtimony of heathen writers; and he was perſuaded, that no man could be an unbeliever, but through vice or ignorance. Hence, he had a thorough contempt of thoſe half-learned and immoral witlings of the age, who againſt the cleareſt records of antiquity, the current

tradition of ages and the greateſt ſtrength and combination of argument, attempted to ſet aſide the authority of the chriſtian religion. But what ſtruck him moſt, was the native excellency, and ſublime moral of the revealed ſyſtem, its invaluable privileges, its ſuitableneſs to the wants of human nature, and to the refining and ſpiritualizing the human ſoul, its direct tendency to purify our baſer paſſions, and to perfect our nobler faculties. Its power in ſupporting thoſe of the infirmeſt age, and tendereſt ſex amidſt tortures and flames, and the happy experience he had of its bleſſed effects upon his own ſpirit, were to him the beſt conviction of its truth and divine original. He felt both joy and peace in believing; and would not ſuffer raſh doubts, and bold objections, ariſing chiefly from the objector's ignorance of ancient manners, rites, and phraſeology, to ſhake his faith, and rob him of that happineſs, which he felt in a chriſtian life.

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He was not ſtaggered or diſtracted by that variety and difference of opinions, which have long diſturbed, and ſtill diſturb the chriſtian church; for he ſaw that few of them concerned chriſtianity. He ſeemed to be of the ſame opinion with Biſhop Taylor concerning religious diſputants, "their "labour, ſays this eminent Prelate (with "no leſs truth than eloquence) is not about "religion, nor about the ſubſtance, nor bo-"dy of religion, nor about the garment of "that body, but about the fringes of that "garment." Dr. Stratford conſidered religion, not as a mere notion, or ſpeculation, a ſubject to diſpute about, or a topic to harangue upon; but as a divine principle, forming in him a new conſtitution of mind, to be drawn forth into practice, and to teach him how to live, and how to die. He was an enemy to all learned ſophiſtry, and metaphyſic ſubtilty upon divine ſubjects, as ſerving more to perplex the head, than to improve the heart. He found (what every man may find) clearneſs and certainty enough

in the capital truths, and grand eſſentials of religion, to produce in him both virtue and happineſs; and while he enjoyed the fruits of righteouſneſs, he left others to contend about the leaves.

His life was the nobleſt comment upon the goſpel, and the beſt proof of its excellency. He was active, ſober and juſt; mild, eaſy and humane; charitable, devout and fervent, againſt almoſt every propenſity in his nature to the contrary qualities.

His parts were not naturally elevated or bright. His ſenſe was rather ſolid than ſublime. He had great ſagacity and penetration, but no very fruitful invention, nor flowing or graceful elocution; could detect falſehood, better than diſcover new truths; and made a better judge, than he would have made a pleader. A conſcience of duty engaged him in a long and laborious courſe of ſtudy in what related to his own profeſſion; and he had, with great application, taken

ken in, within his compaſs of reading, what in the common law had moſt connection with his practice as a civilian. Hence his knowledge was extenſive; and where his memory upon the inſtant failed him, he had ready recourſe to his very copious common place, which he had formed and digeſted alphabetically under proper heads, and ſupported in the conciſeſt manner by proper authorities from the beſt books, and modern caſes. He had a ſound judgment, and his integrity was irreproachable: both indeed had received great advantages from his familiarity with the divine law, and the ſacred influence of a chriſtian conſcience.

He ſeemed by habit and infirmities in danger of falling into indolence and indulgence, to which his fortune was no ſmall temptation. Yet he was not only regular, but diligent in buſineſs; and conſidered the diſcharge of his office, as a neceſſary part of his chriſtian duty. For this reaſon, the morning, after his devotions, was generally employed

employed in the ſtudy of his proper profeſſion, and the remainder of the day in a courſe of exerciſe, and various reading of hiſtory, travels, and ſuch authors as might moſt entertain and edify. But as his chief deſign in reading, was not to be more ingenious, but more holy; not to increaſe his knowledge, but to improve in virtue; he delighted moſt in thoſe writers, who heightened his love and veneration for the ſupreme Being, by diſplaying the wonders of his wiſdom and goodneſs in the ſyſtem of nature, or by recounting the riches of his mercy in the diſpenſation of his grace.

He had neither ſymmetry in his form, grace in his motion, nor comelineſs in his perſon; yet piety gave a charm to all he did or ſaid, to which external beauty would in vain pretend.

True religion gives an engaging delicacy to our manners, which education or nature may mimick, but can never attain to. A

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ſenſe of our infirmities and inſufficiency makes us modeſt: a ſenſe of our corruption natural and moral makes us humble: a ſenſe of the divine preſence makes us decent and ſincere: a ſenſe of the divine goodneſs and mercy makes us obliging and compaſſionate: a ſenſe of our immortality makes us chearful and happy. True religion is a principle of heavenly peace and light within us, which expands itſelf over the human frame and conduct, and ſheds light and beauty on all around us. At eaſe within ourſelves, we cannot give others trouble: when the maſter is God, the ſervant will be God-like, and if our converſation is in heaven, the graces of heaven will dwell on our lips, and ſhine forth in our actions.

He was by nature, not of the kindeſt diſpoſition, and ſeemed choleric and haſty by his habit and complexion. He had none of that flow of natural ſpirits, which make ſome men always pleaſed with themſelves, and entertaining to others. But piety had

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ſweetened his temper, and formed in him a propenſity to all the acts of courteſy and benevolence. He had reaſons to be angry, if unkind uſage, and unreaſonable oppoſition (from which the beſt of men have not been always free) are reaſons: but he was eaſily brought to a reconciliation, where there was room, and to forgiveneſs where there was not: for he was not conſcious of doing to any man ſuch injuries, as uſe not to be forgiven; he had no reaſon to hate any man from that general ſource of implacable hatred, a ſelf-conviction that they had abundant reaſon to hate him. In the regular memorandums he made by way of diary, of the paſſages and buſineſs of his life, I find not the leaſt mention made, or memory retained, of an affront ever offered, or an injury done him. Yet did not his chriſtian charity carry him ſo far as to betray any truth, or flatter injuſtice wherever it appeared. Afraid of none but God, he would boldly aſſert his own, and the rights of the community, where he thought them really invaded,

invaded, and there remained any reaſonable hopes of a remedy. Influenced by the ſame juſt principle, he would not ſuffer paſſion to mix with his conduct in a conteſt with an enemy; but ſacrificed his reſentments, when he was highly provoked, and might have been amply gratified, to what he thought, and what others did not think, a matter of right.

He was affable, eaſy of acceſs, and obliging to all; humble without oſtentation, and complaiſant without deſign or flattery; he ſpoke what he thought, or he ſpoke nothing; yet was never magiſterial in his dictates, or pertinacious in his private opinions. From religion he had acquired a calm and gentle complacency, a ſedate and ſettled frame of ſpirit, free from the caprice of humour, and the irregularity of paſſion. Formed to a regular and uniform courſe of virtue, he had none of that inequality of temper, or diſquiet of mind, which thoſe muſt have, who live in contradiction to nature,

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to reaſon, and to God. I have obſerved him much, and never obſerved him uneaſy, paſſionate, contentious, or complaining. Notwithſtanding his long confinements by periodical fits of the gout, nothing of moroſeneſs, or melancholy, was hereby contracted; but he had generally the ſame chearful and eaſy habit of mind, which at his age, could proceed from nothing but an habitual piety. He never ſeem'd diſturbed, and very little tranſported; for he ſaw nothing in this life that deſerved his fondneſs or diſguſt: he was always pleaſed and eaſy rather than merry, free and humane without levity, and never raiſed to any degree of elevation in his affections, except in his devotions, where he could not always be unobſerved.

His devotion was manly, ſober, prudent and charitable, and ſometimes elevated and heavenly. It was firmly rooted in his heart, and cultivated upon rational principles, without pretending to any extraordinary calls in his converſion, miracle in his conviction, or pangs

pangs in his renovation. He had nothing in his complexion that ſavoured of enthuſiaſm: he might ſeem rather by his habit and natural temper inclined to thoſe gloomy doctrines, which make man miſerable without a fault, and God a tyrant without truth or mercy. Yet was his religion untainted by ſuperſtition, unclouded with melancholy, and not ſoured by ill-humour. A faith in God's promiſes, an adoration of his perfections, a ſubmiſſion to his will, a love and imitation of this beſt of Beings, produced in him, what they are fitted to produce in every honeſt mind, complacency and peace at home, and univerſal charity to mankind.

He was by education, and his firſt connections, and ſeemingly by the very bonds of gratitude ſtrongly attached to the intereſt of a party. Yet religion had taught him to enlarge his ſentiments and charity towards mankind; ſo that he had, for many years, admitted to his converſe, and treated not only with decency but kindneſs, the perſons both

both of romaniſt and diſſenter, though he did not love the principles of either: and he applied alike in his reading, and practical method of religion, the devotional tracts of whig and tory; for he thought true religion was not the property of any party.

If he ſometimes reflected upon the ſtate of the nation, it was in a way becoming a good man; more upon our general manners, than upon particular perſons or meaſures. He had juſt notions of civil liberty, but lamented that of the preſs, when he obſerved a paultry journaliſt impriſoned and fined for reflections upon his betters, while the majeſty of God was traduced, and the doctrines of religion vilified with patience and impunity: as if chriſtianity was no part of the eſtabliſhment, or magiſtrates could hope to preſerve the reſpect due to their characters, while it was allowed to lay aſide all reverence for heaven.

His love to his country made him a very

ry ſevere cenſor, at the proſpect of our morals, and perhaps too much a believer of our ſpeedy ruin. Yet the principle he went upon was true, though ſome may ſay, it was too peremptorily applied. He thought no ſtate could ſtand, where religion was not the baſis; and that laws however good, were idle, and muſt be ineffectual, where the examples of the great were licentious and immoral. Infidelity he ſaw ſpreading, and its inſeparable conſequence, immorality; theſe, he knew (as who does not know with the certainty and clearneſs of a demonſtration?) have been in every age and nation, by the conſtitution of nature, and the diſpoſition of Providence, the parent of miſery to individuals, and of diſtreſs and diſſolution to ſtates and communities.

He was the beſt of citizens, if an unſhaken integrity in public life denote that character; and the ſincereſt lover of his country, if by country we underſtand the conſtitution; the rights of the ſovereign, and the

liberty and happineſs of the ſubject. But he had no manner of regard to, or opinion of artifice and quackery in the management of the body politic. Miniſterial intrigues and revolutions, which make ſo much noiſe in the higher world, if they reached his ear, claimed little of his attention. All low and ſelfiſh expedients calculated to ſerve a preſent turn, to anſwer the ends of ambition, avarice, or revenge, he believed could have no good or laſting effect upon the general intereſt in the nation. This he thought could only be promoted by the wiſdom of men in office, by ſalutary laws, and great examples. His own conduct was formed ſo agreeable to the rules of reaſon and religion, that he could not without ſome concern, obſerve the general violation of both. Yet his reflections upon the public manners, were confined to himſelf and a few of his friends. He was not buſy, nor ſhewed himſelf violent or warm in political affairs; was a member of no cabal, to join in the common cry, and form an eternal oppoſition

on againſt every adminiſtration. He was engaged in better things. He left his example to ſpeak his ſentiments; and no man could with more truth and propriety have applied to himſelf upon a death-bed, what the accompliſhed Athenian Nicias uttered before his laſt fatal march: "I have ever "habitually worſhipped the Gods with a "conſcientious regard to eſtabliſhed law; "and have made juſtice and beneficence "to man, the conſtant practice of my "life."

His beneficence was the more extraordinary, as he was by nature frugal and penurious; yet religion had taught him to abound in good works; and while he ſeemed to retain his native temper, in the care of little things, he diſplayed a divine ſoul in doing the greateſt. He would not give a halfpenny to a common vagrant: he would give one guinea or five, or more to a real ſufferer, or twenty to put out a hopeful boy, an apprentice. His exhibitions to his relati-

ons and dependents were, though ſufficient, yet not laviſh or large; while he made no ſcruple to give a hundred pounds to an Infirmary, or two hundred, to augment a ſmall Cure. He never made a figure in his port, attendants, or equipage. He confined himſelf almoſt to neceſſaries, except in the entertainment of his friends; ſo that on his journies, where he was not known, he was only not neglected. He did in his heart deſpiſe the vulgar reſpect paid to eclat and extravagance; and had large amends made to his conſcience for what he might ſuffer in his credit, from the real good he was enabled to do, by deviating from the common mode of life, and diſſenting from the general profuſion.

YET if he was regular, he was not ſingular. Singularity in things indifferent, he held inconſiſtent with the reſpect due to civil ſociety. He diſagreed no further with the ways of the world, than he thought the world was evidently in the wrong. He

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was frugal without avarice, and an œconomiſt upon principle: to ſatisfy his conſcience in doing what was right, and to extend his charity by a decent retrenchment of unneceſſaries.

It is not eaſy to recount his particular charities: this I can affirm in general from certain knowledge, that for ſeveral years they exceeded the annual profits of his place.* He had as poor an opinion of death-bed charity, as of death-bed repentance. It was, he ſaid, diſtributing what you could no longer keep, and what was no longer your own. Had Providence continued him a while longer in the world, there is reaſon to believe, he had been his own executor. He wanted and wiſhed for opportunities to ſettle large ſums upon laſting foundations, and conſulted ſeveral friends upon the occaſion: but through the infirmities of old age,

* As in the year 1751, the article of charities amounts to 939*l.*

the difficulty of doing what he meant, effectually, and not meeting with proper zeal in others to promote and encourage his pious deſigns, he could not always do what he wiſhed. He rejoiced at the opportunities he met with, and ſeemed to receive greater ſatisfaction in an occaſion of this kind, than others would do in making a good bargain, or an advantageous purchaſe.

He gave in charities, upon different occaſions, in his life-time, ſome thouſand pounds of his own proper money.* That he

* Some perſons have, for reaſons beſt known to themſelves, been pleaſed to ſpeak ill of this gentleman, when he can no longer ſpeak for himſelf. This in all caſes (except where neceſſity, or the proſpect of public utility requires) is indecent and unmanly; in this, unjuſt and ſacrilegious.

The ſecret fund ariſing from a particular branch of his office, and from whence he is ſuppoſed to have ſupplied his charities, and increaſed his fortune, was a very trifling ſum not amounting to 40*l.* in the year: ſometimes diſpoſed of by the miniſter of the pariſh where the offender lived: accounted for to the late Biſhop; and never received by the Commiſſary,

he has given by will the greateſt part of his fortune to the poor, which may amount to ſome thouſand pounds more, is all he well could do, conſiſtent with the regard he had to his relations. Yet to thoſe he has left what only may keep them from dependence, (it was all they expected) and not what may maintain them in affluence. He might, had he been diſpoſed, have adopted one of them, and left a name, a family, and a fortune behind him. But he choſe to die, as he had lived, doing all the good in his power. He looked upon himſelf as a ſtranger upon earth, and he would not act inconſiſtently with his principles: he would not cheriſh the pride of poſthumous fame, which he deſpiſed, nor give to others that family-diſtinction and ſettlement which he himſelf renounced. Happineſs according to his notion of it, did not conſiſt in a large

ſary, or entered in his accounts as a perquiſite of his office, or any part of his fortune, nor expended, or eſteemed by him, as any branch of his charities.

income; but in a competency for this life, and the ſtedfaſt hope of a better. The former he left to his relations, and would not leave them more, that he might not endanger or diminiſh the latter.

THE particular appropriation of ſome of his charitable legacies, and one of the uſes he has recommended the remainder of his fortune to be applied to, * ſhew that the moſt extenſive good, the ſalvation of man, claimed his greateſt attention. He knew the infinite importance of religion, and wiſhed all men to be influenced by its precepts, and happy in its promiſes, as he himſelf was.

AND here I cannot help obſerving the great diſingenuity of the unbeliever in inferring

* THE ſum of 450*l.* is particularly ſpecified to be laid out in books of practical religion, for the uſe of the poor, and the remainder of his fortune is recommended to be applied to this, among other charitable uſes.

ferring from the immoral conduct of nominal chriſtians, the little efficacy of chriſtianity, while the ſhining example, and diſtinguiſhed virtues of him, who is influenced by its principles, are overlooked, or explained away.

THE life of this good man, was the triumph of grace over nature, and the ſtrongeſt inſtance I have obſerved, of the power of plain ſenſe and real chriſtianity, to direct and keep mankind in the road of virtue and happineſs.

HE was amidſt plenty, temperate; and unſhaken by proſperity: in ſickneſs, reſigned: in office, uncorrupt: in authority, humble: agreeable, without wit: of eminent abilities, without genius; and great, without ſhew or oſtentation.

HIS greatneſs aroſe, from whence alone it can ariſe, the conſcientious diſcharge of his duty to God and man. All diſtinction

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and eminence was inconſiderable in his eye, compared to that of a Chriſtian. His quality as a gentleman, and his office as a judge, were what he conformed and ſubmitted to: his relation to God, and his proſpect of immortality were what he gloried in. The goſpel, and its ineſtimable privileges, were engraven upon his heart, and had in a manner razed out all other impreſſions: gave the bias to his will, and ſhed their influence over all his conduct. What were moral excellencies in others, in him were chriſtian graces. If he forgave man, it was becauſe God for Chriſt's ſake had forgiven him: if he did good, it was in imitation of God, who is good to all, and for the ſake of Chriſt, who lived and died, and intercedes for all. The particular virtues and acts of goodneſs, which in others are partial and precarious, as proceeding from humour, nature, intereſt or vanity, had in him the quality of habits, and were fixed and permanent, as flowing from the ſteady and inviolable principles of religion. What is called honour

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in others, was in him the dictate of a chriſtian conſcience: where others ſeek the applauſe of men, he ſought the approbation of God. The ſtudies which others purſue with a view of fame, he cultivated for the crown of immortality. The regularity obſerved by others for the ſake of the body, he practiſed for the ſake of his ſoul. What is called humanity in ſome, and often ariſes from natural temper or ſtudied complaiſance, was in him plain chriſtian humility: what is call generoſity in others, and is often nothing elſe but a vain and wanton profuſion, was in him pure chriſtian charity. His very amuſements were regulated, and his ordinary converſation directed by chriſtian prudence. He had been a very indifferent man, had he not been a moſt diſtinguiſhed chriſtian. But the degeneracy of nature was in him refined, or rather deſtroyed by the diſpenſation of grace; and thus what would have been his miſery and ſhame, was converted by heaven to his happineſs and glory.

SUCH was the life of this good man, to whoſe memory I have endeavoured to do juſtice. His death was not attended with any preceding ſickneſs or ſymptoms of danger; from his conduct and conſtancy under which, we might derive any uſeful leſſon to mankind. He had been abroad in his chariot upon his uſual exerciſe, and after his return home was remarkably chearful in the evening: but in ſome part of the night, and probably in his ſleep, was ſtruck with the dead palſy. The next morning he was found deprived of ſpeech, and, to appearance, of all ſenſe of pain. Thus he languiſhed for a few days, and then expired on the ſeventh of September 1753, in the ſeventy-fifth year of his age. To a perſon thus habitually devout, and thus well prepared, no death could be ſudden: the ſhock was more ſenſibly felt by thoſe, who were acquainted with his virtues, honoured with his friendſhip, or relieved by his bounty.

THE END.

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